Surrendered Love, Redeeming Grace

Roy Eugene Davis

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Surrendered Love, Redeeming Grace

The Author

INTRODUCTION

Thankfully, many who have preceded us into this world have already experienced and demonstrated the enlivening influences of awakened spiritual consciousness and are ideal role models: exceptional examples of what we, too, can experience in our own lives.

Many readers of this book will enjoy the stories about Paramahansa Yogananda and other saints and be inspired by their exemplary behaviors and words. May all who peruse these pages derive helpful insights into spiritual growth processes which can be of personal value.

An overview of yoga philosophy and practices is included in the appendix and some primary English and Sanskrit words are defined in the glossary. A thorough review of these sections is recommended to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the overall theme.

Roy Eugene Davis
Summer 1993
Lakemont, Georgia
U.S.A.

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CHAPTER ONE

Early Years and Intimations of the Future

Since childhood, I have been aware of soul origins and my life's purposes. Fleeting access to memories of past events and frequent, spontaneous, prescient intuitions of providential happenings have provided meaning to many circumstances which would otherwise, perhaps, seem insubstantial or mysterious.

Were we but creatures of the elements, mere biological incidents in the currents of evolutionary forces, we would not have the innate capacity to apprehend conditions more cosmic and causative. When personal awareness even marginally transcends mind-body identification, we know the real truth about our essential beingness. We know ourselves to be units of a field of Pure Consciousness, specialized expressions of an unbounded, single Reality.

At our innermost level of being we are spiritual, and we know it. We have emerged into the field of objective relationships forgetful of our origins and capabilities. Temporarily deluded by a cloud of unconsciousness, we often experience the results of intellectual error and assume a false guise of limitation; thus playing out our roles in relative life as inept, restricted human beings instead of spontaneously expressing inherent, divine qualities which require only our conscious acknowledgement.

I was born on March 9, 1931, at Leavittsburg, Ohio, the fourth of five children and the second son. When I was six years of age our family moved a few miles to a small farm in Braceville Township, Trumbull County, where I grew up and attended school.

My father, Dewitt Talmage Davis, was named after a prominent midwest clergyman because his mother had wanted him to be a minister. His paternal grandfather had come to America from Wales; his maternal grandfather was a Native American, which tribe I do not know.

A firm but fair role model, my father worked in a steel mill for several years and later established a modest trucking business, hauling coal from the mines of Pennsylvania and sometimes working on county road building projects. Somewhat reticent to freely discuss matters of religion he instead demonstrated integrity by his everyday behavior and lived a self-sufficient life until his death in his eighty-eighth year.

My mother, Eva Lee Carter Davis, was born in Kentucky and met and married my father in southern Ohio. As were most homemakers in our rural community, she was attentive to all matters necessary for providing for the welfare and comfort of her family. An avid churchgoer, she would sometimes play the piano in our home and encourage my older sisters to join her in singing familiar Christian hymns and popular songs of the era.

From the time we moved to the farm when I was six, I was assigned daily chores which were to be punctually and correctly completed. These included pumping water for the cows and horses, feeding them as well as the chickens and pigs, and helping my older brother clean the barns and milk cows. In season, we planted and harvested field crops: soy beans, wheat, oats, and corn. Each early spring a vegetable garden was plowed and planted, almost

always according to the signs of the zodiac as gleaned from an almanac. In summer, we brought in hay from the fields. Wood was cut in late autumn to provide heat for the house and when winter snows had melted, the fences around the woods and pastures were repaired and maintained.

There was ample opportunity for fun and play: an outing to the county fair, swimming in the nearby creek, hiking through the woods and fields, and horseback riding. During my teenage years I was particularly fond of riding Flash, my bay stallion.

During the first few years on the farm we did not have the convenience of electric power. The house was heated in winter by a coal and wood burning basement furnace and cooking was done on a large, cast-iron stove in the kitchen. Kerosene lamps and lanterns were used in the house and barns during dark evening seasons of the year. Water was hand drawn from an open well near the back porch. With the eventual availability of electricity, several conveniences were made possible: a refrigerator and kitchen appliances, and a radio to entertain the family and provide news of the outside world.

Attendance of Sunday morning worship services at the nearby United Brethren Church was mandatory for our family. Often, as the pastor preached his sermon, my attention wandered from his words as I reflected upon God's relationship with human beings, God's relationship with me, and about what world conditions would be like in the decades ahead.

In my mind's eye, I saw myself as one of God's servants, traveling widely to share the "good news" of His reality and immediate accessibility. When I pondered the stories told of Old Testament prophets and of Jesus and his disciples, my imagination took flight. I wanted to be like them! Even then, I felt myself to be inwardly surrendered

and committed to God's will, but my private musings were not then shared with family members or friends.

Shy, and somewhat introverted, my prayer life and frequent interludes of spiritual reflection deepened. I read favorite portions of scripture with increasing interest, attempting to discern the inner spirit and meaning of the words behind the surface accounts of historical incidents and cultural circumstances.

Whether working in the fields, at school, involved with family activities or alone, I would be ever alert and watchful for signs of God's imminent assurances and leadings. From time to time, it seemed to me that a benevolent, though invisible, presence was attempting to make itself more obviously known to my mind and consciousness. This "tangible something larger than my personality-self," was perceived as inclusive of me while yet more cosmic and knowing. As awareness of it became more pronounced, it afforded increasing degrees of personal comfort and inner conviction of protection.

One summer night during my fifteenth year, at the conclusion of a series of revival services at the local church, I was compelled to respond to the altar call extended by a young, visiting evangelist. Standing before the congregation, I was asked by the presiding minister to raise my right hand as an act of public declaration indicating my commitment to the Christ of God. Privately, the divinity I worshipped was not confined to theological speculations, but transcended them.

My major interest at that time was reading books, borrowed from the high school and public libraries. I read broadly and voraciously: biographies, especially, and the works of Walt Whitman, Henry David Thoreau, and Ralph Waldo Emerson.*

* In his essay *The Oversoul*, Emerson (1803-1882) wrote: "We live in

It was from books that the world of yoga was opened to me. While reading Francis Yeats Brown's *Lives of a Bengal Lancer*, his account of many years in India in the service of the British Army, I thrilled to the stories of his contacts with yogis. Of particular interest was the concise outline of yoga philosophy included in the book.

Paul Brunton's *A Search in Secret India*, a vivid recording of his meeting with yogis and saints in that land often referred to as "the mother of religions" added a new dimension to my understanding. Of the personalities described by the author, Ramana Maharishi, who lived out his life in a secluded region of southern India, was most appealing to me.

As a young adult of seventeen years, Ramana pondered the phenomenon of death. Engaging in a process of self-experimentation, he intellectually determined what it might be like to remove his awareness from body and mind, concluding that if the body were to cease its functions and the mind to be devoid of thoughts, he would continue to exist as self-aware consciousness. Soon thereafter, he left home and sought refuge near a temple and continued his introspective deliberations. Untrained in the processes of yoga, he prayed simply to God with an attitude of total surrender. Dynamic inner forces awak-

succession, in division, in parts, in particles. Meantime, within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal One. And this deep power in which we exist and its beatitude is all accessible to us; is not only self-sufficing and perfect in every hour, but the act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and the spectacle, the subject and object, are one." Emerson and his friends who shared similar philosophical views were often referred to as "transcendentalists" and were known to be avid readers of the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Upanishads*. In the early 1880s, Emerson's wife hosted in her home one of the first known philosophers of India to visit America.

Paramahansa Yogananda
Early 1940s

Roy Eugene Davis at age 12

ened within him, compelling spontaneous, transformative changes in his consciousness resulting in direct perception of higher realities. When his spiritual unfoldment had reached a certain stage, he retreated to a cave on Arunachala Mountain near Tiruvannamalai, a region still considered an abode of saints and siddhas. An ashram was later constructed at the base of the mountain by devotees and remains as a place of pilgrimage for disciples and truth seekers. Until his passing in 1950, thousands sought out the company of sage Ramana Maharishi, to receive his words of wisdom and the silent transmission of his illumined consciousness.

A most helpful source of information during my early investigations of spiritual practices was Theos Bernard's text on *Hatha Yoga*, one of the more clearly detailed accounts on the subject to be published in the West. In it I found specific instructions for practicing asanas, pranayamas, and some meditation procedures.

In my upstairs bedroom, I practiced a regular routine of asanas and pranayamas, soon discovering that I had a natural aptitude for the procedures. Often, I sat in one of the prescribed meditation postures and imagined myself to be a Himalayan yogi: my room was my secret cave and the gods smiled on me! Early meditation attempts, while not completely successful, were interesting episodes of self-discovery and provided a degree of understanding of the process.

During the final two years of high school I became interested in body building and trained thrice weekly with a set of barbells purchased with savings from a modest allowance. I soon discovered, however, that my physical constitution was not organized to produce pronounced muscle mass, despite my adherence to recommended exercise routines and a diet of high protein foods.

In early 1949, during my senior year, I became ill with rheumatic fever and was confined to bed for the following five months. Our family physician prescribed a regimen of complete rest and a nourishing diet. I knew that my food habits had overly challenged the body's systems and felt internal cleansing to be necessary. By reviewing my collection of health-oriented magazines I was soon motivated to change to a vegetarian food plan, with emphasis on a variety of vegetables and some fruits known to be good sources of vitamin C.

The necessary duration of seclusion contributed to my psychological maturity and spiritual growth. I had ample time to think more clearly about my future and to deepen my prayer life. While perusing a back issue of *Physical Culture* magazine, of which Bernard MacFadden, a pioneer exponent of natural living, was the publisher, I noticed an advertisement offering the book *Autobiography of a Yogi** by Paramahansa Yogananda. I had seen the advertisement some months earlier but had not then responded to my initial urge to order the book. This time, however, I did request a copy, which was soon delivered by the mail carrier.

Paramahansaji's book became my treasured companion. His vivid accounts of saints, and of yogic processes and miracles, nourished my mind and stirred my soul. As I gazed at his photograph, and the likenesses of his guru lineage—Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, and Sri Yukteswar—I experienced an undeniable spiritual rapport. Surely, I felt, my life was intimately related to theirs and would be enriched beyond measure by forces flowing through them.

Before long, at my request, I also began to receive a

*First published in 1946 by The Philosophical Library, New York. Subsequent editions published by Self-Realization Fellowship, Los Angeles, of which Paramahansa Yogananda was the founder.

series of weekly, printed lessons which Paramahansaji had prepared for his students around the world, and diligently practiced the meditation routines which were recommended. Gradually, I began to experience a diminishment of ego boundaries and an improved understanding of my relationship with God. In the quiet of night, I prayed earnestly for guidance. I desired to again be well and able to go to California to meet Paramahansaji, whom I had already accepted in my heart as my guru.

At times, as I meditated, looking into the spiritual eye center, I observed ever-changing patterns of brilliant, colored lights. One early evening, as I prayed, a sudden force flooded my spine, flowing upward and causing it to arch while my attention was pulled more forcefully into the spiritual eye and upper brain. Perspiration was profuse because of the heat generated in my body by the intensity of my concentrated, devotional ardor.

After a duration, the force subsided, leaving me relaxed and tranquil. A profound calm pervaded my mind, along with an inner certainty that prevented any further concern about my physical condition or future circumstances. Awareness of the "something larger than my personality-self" was more pronounced and was recognized as more Real than ever before.

By writing weekly reports and completing examinations at home, I was able to satisfy high school requirements and allowed to graduate at the end of the spring term. By early summer I was able to leave my bed and begin a return to normal physical activities. I had lost forty pounds of body weight during the five month duration of illness, but the pain and fevers were gone and renewed surges of vitality were springing from deeper reserves.

Through the remaining months of that summer and

into early autumn I maintained a regular, daily routine of sunbathing, hatha yoga practices and interludes of meditation. Restoration to complete physical health was rapid, along with inner growth.

One early morning, acting on impulse and disregarding parental advice to the contrary, I decided to leave home. My father, with evident reluctance, accepted my choice of action and drove me to the bus station.

With some clothes in a small suitcase and less than one hundred dollars in my pocket, I embarked for Miami, Florida. My impetuously conceived plan was to avoid another Ohio winter and earn enough money to make possible travel to California.

CHAPTER TWO

I Meet Paramahansa Yogananda

The two-day journey southward was a novel experience. Until then, I had not been more than two hundred miles from the community of my boyhood. Upon arrival in Miami, I rented a small, sparse room in the Poinsettia Hotel, a modest downtown facility, for two dollars a day. Almost immediately, I found employment as a food preparer in a small, suburban restaurant, working from early morning to midafternoon, for which I was paid one dollar an hour and provided a noon meal. Within two weeks, lured by the prospect of more generous financial rewards, I joined a group of young men hired to sell magazine subscriptions from door to door throughout the state.

A few days later, while in Palm Beach, an interesting and timely event occurred. When I knocked on the door of a small house in a quiet section of the city, an older woman of pleasant demeanor responded. She was not interested in magazines, she said, but she was interested in my future plans and invited me into the living room for a conversation. To her pointed inquiries about my ultimate goals, I informed her without hesitation of my intention to go to California to study with Paramahansaji.

Indicating no evidence of surprise, she led me into an adjoining room which served as her personal study and library. There, on floor-to-ceiling shelves, were hundreds

of books representing a diverse range of religious and philosophical themes. She informed me that it was "in this very room" that William Walker Atkinson* had, years before, researched and written several of his books. As I thanked my hostess and prepared to depart, she asked, "Why are you waiting? If you are planning to be with your teacher, why don't you go right away?"

Her timely suggestion reinforced my own private thoughts and, that evening, choosing an appropriate moment, I informed the sales manager of my wish to leave. He was agreeable to my decision and early the next morning, in Tampa, took me to the northern edge of the city, loaned me five dollars in exchange for my wristwatch as security, and wished me well. I redeemed the watch several weeks later by sending him a letter with repayment for his generous act.

After purchasing from a roadside grocery store a modest supply of nuts, raisins, and a box of dry, rolled oats for snacks along the way, I stood by the highway to begin the cross-country journey. A ride was not offered that day, and the night was spent huddled near a small fire which I made in a nearby orange grove.

The next morning, somewhat rested and with a positive mental attitude, I was provided rides to Tallahassee and DeFuniack Springs. Six days later, having traveled through Louisiana, Texas, Arizona and California, I arrived in Los Angeles, where I went directly to the downtown public library.

There, in the religion-philosophy department, I was astounded to behold the vast array of books and periodicals! Several back issues of *Self-Realization Magazine*

*An American writer (1862-1932) of popular books on New Thought themes. From about 1903 onwards he wrote a series of books on yoga philosophy, using the pseudonym "Yogi Ramacharaka."

were avidly perused and the Fellowship's street address carefully noted. At dusk, in need of food and rest, I inquired of a passerby for information about shelters for indigent persons and was directed to the nearby, downtown Fifth Street Mission. There, I was provided a hot meal and a clean bed for the night.

Most of the following day was again spent in the public library. Late in the afternoon, I walked a few city blocks to where streetcars were accessible and inquired of a store clerk for directions to the Highland Park district of the city. He directed me to the appropriate streetcar loading area, informed me of the approximate travel distance, and spontaneously provided ten cents for travel fare.

Twenty minutes later, suitcase in hand, I started up the steep, winding street leading to the summit of Mt. Washington. A passing car stopped and the driver, a young man, asked, "Where are you going?" When I told him, he invited me to get in. "I'm going right by there," he said, "I'll drop you off at the front gate."

Almost immediately upon entering the spacious grounds, a pleasant man of middle age greeted me, introduced himself as Ralph Sherman, and escorted me directly to a dining room in the basement of the main building where several young men were gathered for their evening meal. I was welcomed and invited to join them.

After supper, Donald Walters,* who appeared to be the

*J. Donald Walters became a disciple of Paramahansa Yogananda in 1948, shortly after completing his higher education. He was very soon given the responsibility of supervising the activities of the male monastics, was ordained a minister, and was for many years involved in various organizational departments in America and India. He was ordained into the ancient order of swamis and took the name Kriyananda. After leaving the Self-Realization Fellowship in the mid-1960s he founded the highly successful Ananda Spiritual Community near Nevada City, California.

group leader, presented himself and invited me to join him in the reception room on the ground floor.

During our relatively brief conversation, Donald inquired into my background and my reasons for being there. He was polite, friendly and cheerful, and seemed genuinely interested in my welfare. Suddenly, he stood up, with an expression of delight on his face. Looking toward the nearby hallway entrance, he exclaimed, "Master is coming!" With his words, I heard with him the unmistakable sounds of an elevator descending.

Following Donald's lead, I also stood and turned in anticipation to the hallway entrance. Paramahansaji entered the room, followed by three women disciples. He wore a dark blue suit and overcoat, a white neck scarf, and a lighter blue felt hat. Acknowledging Donald, he stood before me, his gaze steady, revealing eyes that shared fathomless love and a soul at home in the Infinite.

Paramahansaji smiled gently and shook my hand. His first words to me were, "How old are you?"

"Eighteen, sir," I replied.

"Do your parents know you've come here?" he inquired.

I assured him that my being there would present no problems in respect to my family relationships and he seemed satisfied.

He continued to look into my eyes and I could sense that he was probing my innermost thoughts and feelings. Then, with a light touch of his right hand on my forehead, he quietly said, "All right. I'll see you again," and proceeded with the disciples who were with him to his car, which was parked in the driveway at the front porch stairs.

Donald led me along a narrow, garden pathway to a small house on the property then used as a dormitory, where a few resident monastics were getting settled for

the evening. A small group of them were practicing hatha yoga postures in the main room. Others were quietly attending to personal matters.

The building was crowded because several visitors had arrived from the Encinitas retreat center, one hundred miles south of Los Angeles, to participate in scheduled weekend programs. The following day, a Saturday, would be Christmas Eve day and the occasion for an extended group meditation. On Christmas day there would be a banquet in the main building during the early evening hours.

I was assigned a small bed in the corner of the front room. There, after a bath and when the lights were turned out, my consciousness hovered at the portals of sleep as I reflected upon my extreme good fortune. So it was, on the 23rd of December, 1949, I arrived at my guru's ashram. It was the beginning of what would be almost four years of intensive spiritual training and the foundation for many years of ministry activity to follow.

By nine o'clock the next morning, approximately two hundred devotees—resident and visiting disciples—had assembled in the large reception room of the main building for the Christmas Season meditation. There was a short delay because Paramahansaji had not yet come down from his third floor apartment. During the waiting interlude, I was introduced to several disciples who had only that morning arrived.

When Paramahansaji entered the room, from the same hallway where I had met him only a few hours before, he walked slowly, accompanied by James J. Lynn,* a spiritually advanced businessman-disciple who had come from the midwest to be present. Both were radiant,

*See Chapter Five.

and a profound aura of peace spread through the room as they walked into the chapel, where they were seated on chairs before the altar. Disciples and guests then followed, and were directed by ushers to designated seating areas.

Framed photographs of Paramahansaji's guru line adorned the altar, along with a representative art portrait of Jesus. Candlelight contributed to the sacred mood and the faint fragrance of incense could be discerned.

Master* welcomed everyone, speaking in soft, measured tones about the significance of the Holy Season. He mentioned a few disciples by name, acknowledging their devotion and service, and talked of God, Christ Consciousness, and the gurus. He referred to God as both Father and Mother, as the Supreme Being beyond creation and as the Divine Energy expressing as Nature. His settled composure and conviction grounded in Self-realization established a mood of gentle intimacy and trust. It was a magical interlude. The illusory boundaries of space and time seemed to dissolve to let in Eternity.

At a signal from Master, Dr. M.W. Lewis† began to play on the organ one of the devotional chants Paramahansaji had, long before, adapted from those of his native land.

**Master*. One who is recognized as having attained proficiency, who is qualified to teach others and whose teachings are accepted by students. All of the disciples, as well as many who were not, referred to Paramahansaji as Master.

†Minott W. Lewis, born March 1893, in Somerville, Massachusetts, and his wife, Mildred, met Paramahansaji in 1920 in Boston and were initiated into Kriya Yoga. Dr. Lewis practiced dentistry and taught meditation classes there until his retirement in the 1940s, when he and Mildred moved permanently to California to live at the Encinitas retreat. Until his death in 1960, Dr. Lewis lectured at the San Diego temple on a regular schedule and devoted much of his private time to meditation.

"Chanting will enable you to win at least half the battle in meditation," Master proclaimed. "When you chant with devotion to God, all stray thoughts are driven from your mind. Then, you will know God's presence!"

Group chanting continued for several minutes. As the final refrains faded, we were instructed in meditation procedure and encouraged to sit for an extended duration of silent practice. Every thirty or forty minutes, Master would talk quietly about God and the saints and introduce another chanting session, which was followed by more meditation. At noon, a thirty minute rest break was announced.

Much later, one disciple told me that as he departed the chapel he felt several, gentle but discernible gusts of wind pass him in the hallway. When he returned to the chapel, Paramahansaji asked him, "Did you see them? Did you see them? There were saints here who left the room when you did!"

With the passing months I was to learn that Master would occasionally speak of saints and spiritually advanced souls who often visited him in their subtle forms. Highly enlightened souls, easily able to move through illusory veils of consciousness which are believed by spiritually unawake persons to be impenetrable, are often attracted to shrines and other sacred places where the love of God prevails.

During the afternoon session, Paramahansaji spoke of Krishna and Radha as symbolic of the interplay between Spirit and Nature, dual aspects of the single Reality. Mr. Lynn suddenly slumped in his chair, his face suffused with a beatific glow. A few moments later, his composure regained, he again sat upright. Paramahansaji chuckled softly and remarked, "Saint Lynn can't stand it when I talk like this. He always goes into ecstasy!" Because of Mr.

Paramahansa Yogananda (*1949*)

Lynn's spiritual state, Master frequently referred to him as a saint, and did so on that occasion.

At the conclusion of the daylong meditation program Paramahansaji stood at the chapel entrance and blessed each person as they departed. To some, he recommended they go to their private quarters to continue meditative contemplation.

On Sunday morning I attended the regular service at the Self-Realization temple, in Hollywood. Dedicated in 1942, the facility is set back off Sunset Boulevard with a lawn and flower gardens between the sanctuary and entrance archway.

Master opened the service by leading the congregation in a responsive prayer, followed by selected readings from The New Testament and the *Bhagavad Gita* and commentary on both scriptures. Devotional chanting and meditation preceded his extemporaneous talk, which lasted about an hour. His presentation was uniquely compelling, especially when he shared anecdotes and personal accounts of his relationship with God. The most profound philosophical themes were sometimes accompanied by spontaneous asides and humorous remarks.

When the service ended, one of the secretaries approached me. "Master wants to see you later," she said, "after he has talked with the others who are scheduled for interviews."

It was Paramahansaji's routine to meet with friends and students after Sunday morning services, and it was often late in the afternoon before the meetings were concluded.

When I was finally summoned, I was led to a small room adjacent to the stage and altar area in the temple. Master, sitting on a small couch as I entered, motioned for me to sit beside him. Putting me at ease with a welcome

smile, he remained quiet for a moment. Then, in words barely audible, he asked, "What can I do for you?"

I sensed that he knew why I was there but preferred that I verbalize my request. "I want to be your disciple, sir," I responded.

He seemed pleased, and was again quiet for a moment, then said, "This is not a path of escapism, you know." It was both a statement and a question.

"I know that, sir," I assured him.

He then asked about my health. When I affirmed that I felt well, he said, "Let's see," as he reached out with his left hand to feel my pulse at the wrist. After a pause, he smiled, "Yes, you are all right."

Pulse diagnosis is common to several wellness systems with roots in Asia and the Far East. A skilled practitioner of the method can detect, by touch alone, the vitality level of the patient-client as well as the functional condition of major systems and organs.

After a few more words of counsel and encouragement, he concluded the interview by placing his hand on my forehead and pronouncing his decision: "You stay. I will see you from time to time."

Early that evening, disciples and visiting guests gathered in the large ground floor room of the main building for the annual Christmas banquet. While awaiting Master's arrival, devotees stood near the tables or gathered in small groups to enjoy quiet fellowship with friends. Mr. Lynn approached my group and introduced himself to me, offering personal words of advice. Knowing that I was newly accepted for training by Master, he recommended that I meditate on a regular schedule for short periods of time until a degree of proficiency was acquired, then meditate longer and more deeply. "That is what I found to be helpful when I first began to meditate, many years ago,"

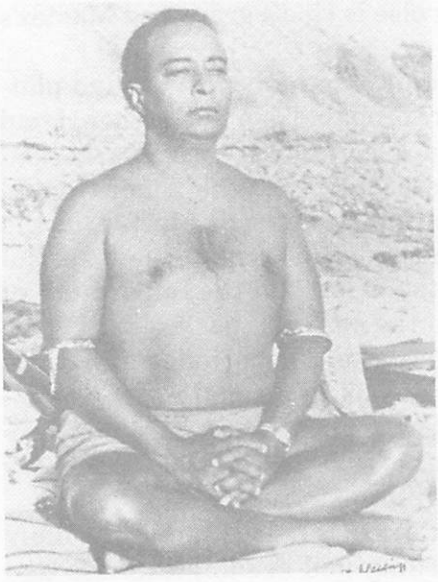
he confided. "Everything else is God's grace and Master's love."

When we were seated at long tables, bowls and platters of delicious foods were brought from the kitchen. I had never before experienced such culinary variety: cooked vegetables, some lightly seasoned and others more highly spiced, salads, rice, breads, and desserts. Master, at the head table with some older disciples and a few special guests, occasionally spoke of God and the importance of loyalty and dedication on the spiritual path.

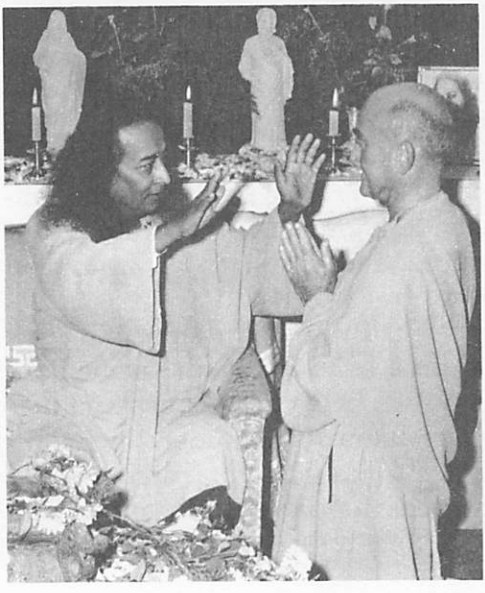
When most of the guests had departed, a few of us gathered about Paramahansaji, in a small nearby room, while he talked with a few remaining visitors and presented gift-wrapped copies of some of his books to persons who were there for the first time.

During the next few weeks I participated in the daily monastic routines of morning and evening exercise and meditation, and performed various work assignments: raking leaves, sweeping sidewalks and the driveway, and typing form letters to lesson students in various parts of the country. Donald Walters coordinated the men's activity schedules and presided during the meditation sessions which preceded breakfast and supper. Evenings and weekends were to be used for private study and contemplation. On some weekends, a group of us would seek out a secluded place for an extended session of devotional chanting and meditation.

During those early weeks I was also assigned to work duties at the newly acquired Lake Shrine in Pacific Palisades. The property was then being landscaped and prepared for public dedication later that summer. Surrounding the small lake are shrines honoring major world religions and private areas for meditative quiet. Tall towers, with golden lotus domes, serve as a central focus.



Paramahansa Yogananda in the desert
circa 1940s



Paramahansa Yogananda blessing J.J. Lynn and giving him the monastic name of Rajarsi Janakananda
August, 1951

Behind them, near an embankment, is an ornate, carved stone sarcophagus from China in which a portion of Mahatma Gandhi's ashes are kept. A friend of Paramahansaji's had them sent from India. Property overlooking the shrine area was also purchased, by Mr. Lynn at his guru's request, during the early stages of planning and development. Master had wanted to protect the privacy of the site and, later, expressed his wish that a temple be eventually constructed there. Work on that project was started in autumn, 1991.

At Mt. Washington headquarters, Master would occasionally walk the grounds. When disciples would happen upon him at such times he would frequently stop and talk with them, or invite them to join him as he made his rounds. During such unplanned interludes he shared a more personal side of his nature and gave us private instruction for improving our spiritual practices. He would sometimes say, "I go through your souls every day, to keep track of you and help you, if you will allow me to help you."

Whenever I would see him, he would invariably say, "Be patient, Roy, I have plans for you."

Quite aside from our occasional interludes of personal conversation, I became increasingly aware of a deeper relationship being established between us. Although he had not yet formally accepted me as a disciple, he treated me like the others and expected appropriate conduct. While seldom asking about my inner condition, his comments and behaviors toward me confirmed that he knew it. As the weeks passed, I experienced direct transmission of knowledge from him, often discerning his moods and thoughts and anticipating comments he would later make to me. When not physically in his presence, I was mentally and spiritually attuned to his mind and consciousness. On many occasions when I would intuitively become aware of

his unspoken thoughts, he would glance at me and share a knowing smile.

A few days after I arrived, an older disciple, Mr. Brockway, became ill. I, along with two or three others, was assigned to take meals to his room and look in on him from time to time. He once confided to another disciple, "I have great respect for Paramahansaji but I don't have the faith you boys seem to have. I wish I did." A carpenter, Mr. Brockway had met Master after many years of searching for understanding.

One day, he was taken to the hospital and Paramahansaji went to see him, returning at a late hour. "I have just been with Mr. Brockway," he told us. "I asked him, 'Do you want to live? If you do, tell me right now and I will heal you.' But he said, 'No, sir.' He has lost his will to live and I couldn't help him. If he had said 'Yes' I could have healed him and he would have had a few more years to make spiritual progress. It was so sad to see him like that."

Mr. Brockway made his transition a few days later and I cleaned his room and packed his personal possessions for his family. Afterward, I sat in his room for a few minutes, to meditate and ponder the precariousness and fragility of the human condition, and of the certainty of everlasting Spirit. Master's invisible but tangible presence pervaded the stillness.

In many, varied ways during those first few weeks with Paramahansaji, I became increasingly aware of the awesome depth of his God-realization and the power for good that was available through him for anyone who could be responsive to his willingness to provide spiritual help at any level of need. To disciples, he would sometimes say,"If you allow me, I will reveal God to you."

CHAPTER THREE

Discipleship and Experiences on the Path

"Master wants to see you tonight. Be in the basement hallway, by the kitchen, at seven o'clock!" The surprising message was conveyed to me by Bernard Cole, a senior minister who often lectured at the Hollywood temple when Paramahansaji was speaking elsewhere.

A new building, with a vegetarian restaurant planned for the street level and a fellowship hall downstairs, was then under construction on the temple grounds. All of the monks had been assigned to the project on that particular day, to assist during the pouring of the concrete foundation walls. Bernard had come to the site late in the afternoon to examine the work in progress and inform me of my later appointment.

After supper, alone at the designated place, I sat quietly in a meditative mood. Physically tired but mentally alert, I waited four hours in the night silence. Finally, shortly before midnight, I decided that Master had been detained and retired to the dormitory to sleep.

"Where were you last night?" The question was directed to me by Bill Brown, one of the younger disciples. "Master had to go out last night and got back late. The first thing he asked when he arrived here was, 'Where's Roy?' I offered to find you but he said he would see you later."

I was disappointed, and ashamed of my lack of patience a few hours earlier. Later that day, Bernard again sought me out. "Master wants to see you," he said. "Same time, same place."

That evening, at seven o'clock, I resumed my watch. About two hours later, there was a flurry of activity as Master's car was brought to the basement entrance and an assortment of luggage was carried out and carefully loaded. Word spread that Master was soon to depart for an extended stay at his desert retreat near Twentynine Palms, east of Los Angeles.

For many years it had been Paramahansaji's routine to occasionally withdraw from active organizational involvement by going into seclusion, to meditate and concentrate on writing projects.

Thirty or more disciples lined the hallway to bid their guru a fond farewell. After a duration of waiting, it was announced that Master was talking on the telephone and would not be departing until the next day. The luggage was retreived and his car driven back to the garage. I was again left alone at my post; this time resolved to remain there through the night, if necessary. I did not have to wait long.

I heard the elevator descend and stop. The door slid open and Master peered out, scanning the area. With a broad smile, he exclaimed, "There's my boy!"

"Come with me, Roy," he invited, leading the way to Bernard's nearby apartment. At his knock, the door was immediately opened and we entered. Clifford Fredericks, an older resident disciple, was also there. Master was dressed to go out for a walk and was snacking from a handful of almonds. Catching my eye, he remarked, "This is the first thing I've had to eat all day."

Asking me to kneel before him, he took my right hand

in his. Then, in a quiet, paternal manner, he spoke directly to me. "When Sri Yukteswar accepted me as a disciple, he said 'I pledge you my unconditional love. No matter what you do, or fail to do, I will love you forever.' " Master paused, then said to me, "Roy, in the same way, I pledge you my unconditional love. Can you pledge the same love to me?"

"Yes, sir," I assured him. My voice seemed to echo in my consciousness as though uttered in a vast chamber of endless, timeless space.

When I stood up, Master put his hand on my head in a gesture of blessing and, looking into my eyes, inquired, "Will you do as I ask?" My response was immediately affirmative.

"I want you to go to Phoenix. We have a new project there. The climate will be good for your health, too. Bernard will take you to the train station in the morning." After confirming the train schedule with Bernard, Master suggested I get some rest, and asked me to write to him frequently and visit him at least every two months.

The "new project" in Arizona was a goat dairy, which had been recently purchased as a business venture to help fund the Phoenix Self-Realization Fellowship center.

Upon arrival in Phoenix after noon the following day, I went by taxi directly to the center, then located in a house on a corner lot near the state capitol building. Bernard's mother was in temporary residence and had a meal prepared. Herbert Freed, the minister, soon joined us.

While we ate, Herbert launched into a detailed explanation of the goat dairy business, extolled the virtues of goat's milk, and predicted glorious success for the venture. A year or two older than me, Herbert was obviously a visionary. His seemingly boundless enthusiasm was contagious and I liked him immediately.

The five-acre Rosebud Goat Dairy was located approximately three miles from downtown Scottsdale, then a one-stoplight village only a twenty minute drive from the Phoenix center, and near the Pima Indian reservation. For a modest sum provided by Mr. Lynn, the Fellowship had obtained the property and a herd of four dozen goats. A few months later, eighty more were purchased to boost milk production.

When the dairy was purchased, existing buildings included a large shed for the goats, a milk processing room, and two modest dwellings. Later, three larger adobe brick barns were constructed to shelter the animals during cold or rainy weather.

I arranged a small altar in a corner area of my private room, upon which I placed framed photographs of Master and my guru line. Before dawn and late at night, I would sit on the floor before the altar and meditate. My meditations had become more consistently satisfying and I devoted two or three hours a day to practice.

Many interesting, spontaneous perceptions occurred whenever I was able to be more relaxed and fully surrendered to the meditation processes. One night, after more than an hour of internalized focusing, I became aware of myself as a point of awareness located near the second chakra in the lower spinal pathway. I could see inside my body; internal organs, bones, brain and nervous system were illumined by radiant, white light. It seemed a most natural perception and I was able to observe various physiological processes with detached interest. After a while, I felt myself expanding until I again resumed full physical awareness.

Often I would see visions, which I presumed at the time to be perceptions of astral spheres. Some visions seemed to be the result of past life memories. Sometimes,

Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, Sri Yukteswar, Master, and other luminous beings unknown to me, would appear in the spiritual eye center. At other times, my consciousness would be so expanded that it seemed to include the cosmos, blended with celestial, causal, and astral realms. Some of these perceptions may well have been but illusory mental incidents reinforced by wishful thinking; many, however, were vividly real—or as "real" as any phenomena this side of the Transcendental Field can be.

Master had counseled me earlier, "Stay in tune with me and I will be able to help you. When you are restless or have doubts, it causes static in your mental radio and makes it more difficult for me to help you. So stay in tune with me."

Indeed, I experienced that when I was mentally and spiritually in harmony with Paramahansaji, I was more inwardly peaceful and my meditations were more fruitful. I also discovered that he knew my thoughts and feelings even when we were physically separated by many miles. During rare occasions when I experienced brief episodes of apathy or discouragement, he would send me a concise, handwritten letter or note. Invariably, his words confirmed his precise knowledge of my inner conditions and personal circumstances.

During my first year of discipleship I experienced occasional moods, feeling that God was not responding to my prayers and that the path to liberation of consciousness loomed long and arduous before me. During one such phase, Master sent me note in which he advised: "Roy, you make yourself unhappy by indulging in moods and playing negative mental phonograph records in your mind. Why don't you just break the records and free yourself?" It was true that my interludes of moodiness had been a form of self-indulgence. His words and his grace were sufficient to

enable me to discard the self-limiting habit.

From time to time, Master would request that I visit him, usually at his retreat in the desert. Two modest houses were on the property where Master lived. One was his residence; the living room was used for writing, processing correspondence, and meeting with disciples who were invited to be with him. The other house served as a residence for some of the female disciples who processed his letters and transcribed and edited his writings. A few miles away, another house was maintained for male disciples who maintained the buildings and grounds where Master stayed.

During one of my visits to the Twentynine Palms retreat site, while helping an older disciple fasten wire mesh to the wall of the garage in preparation for an application of plaster, Master appeared on the scene.

A few yards from where we stood, was a small swimming pool which had recently been installed for Master's use. Speaking to the other disciple, he said, "Jerry, get the pump from the garage and empty the pool."

To my utter astonishment, Jerry didn't even look away from his work when he was thus addressed. His sullen retort was, "I can't do it now, sir. I'm too busy with this job."

Turning to me, Master asked, "Will you empty the pool, Roy?" Responding to his request and following his instructions, I found two five-gallon buckets and a length of heavy rope in the garage and proceeded with the project.

Attaching the rope to one bucket, I took water from the pool, poured it into the second bucket, then refilled the first one and carried the water to nearby shrubs and plants. Several hours later I discovered that even a swimming pool of modest size can contain thousands of gallons of water.

By late afternoon, with blistered hands and aching

muscles, but with a happy heart, I was pleased to see the water level significantly lowered.

The next morning, as I prepared to resume the task, Master came out of his house. From his vantage point near the patio the pool appeared to be empty. "My God," he exclaimed. "Look what Roy has done!" Coming closer, he saw the remaining water at the bottom of the pool and his demeanor changed from one of interested observation to executive expediency. Without looking behind him to confront Jerry, he simply raised his voice and ordered, "Jerry, get the pump and finish draining this pool!" Jerry moved with astounding quickness to comply.

Some of my most memorable occasions, during my desert visits with Master, were the early evening hours when he would stroll the circumference of the grounds and invite others to walk with him. He would sometimes walk alone with me. Now and then, he might notice a scrap of paper on the ground and ask me to retrieve it. From time to time he would see a small stone and kick it ahead a few feet, as a child might do for amusement. Sometimes we walked in silence, occasionally holding hands. At other times he would talk about God and invite my questions.

"See that mountain over there?" he asked, indicating the direction by pointing with his walking stick. "Most people who look at it, see only a mass of soil and rock. When I look at it, I see only God."

"Sir," I ventured, "How many saints, who are mentioned in your book, are fully liberated?"

His response was immediate. "Not many. Some saints are so content to rejoice in the bliss of God-communion that they forget their resolve for liberation. They can remain absorbed in that bliss for millions of years before going beyond it to full God-realization."

During one of my visits to the desert, an outwardly

casual, yet transforming incident occurred. For several days prior to going, I had experienced occasional pains in my chest and left arm, usually after a day of strenuous physical work at the dairy.

Upon arrival, when I first talked with Master, he inquired, "How are your parents?" Before he had completed the phrase my mind interpreted his question to be, "How is your pain?" To which I impulsively responded, "It's not too bad now, sir."

A look of concern came into his face. "What's not bad now?"

"This pain I've been having now and then."

"You have pain?" he inquired further.

As I began to describe the symptoms he touched my chest with his hand, interrupting my recital with a simple statement: "You'll be all right now." He then changed the theme of our conversation and the subject was never mentioned again. Nor did the symptoms ever return.

I had frequent opportunities to observe Master's ways, often direct and sometimes subtle, of instructing disciples. He was usually forthright in his personal communications with us. At other times, he might speak to one person so that others present could also benefit. On one such occasion the hour was late and the night was dark. Several disciples were gathered at the entrance to the driveway, preparing to return to their private quarters.

Master came out to talk with us for a few minutes. He was carrying a small flashlight, which he turned off once he had gotten to where we waited. After a discussion of several minutes, he directed a flashlight beam into my face and held it steady. Then, very gently but loud enough for all to hear, he said, "Roy, when you first came to me, I asked the others (some of whom were present), 'Shall we keep him or let him go?' And do you know what they said?"

"No, sir," I responded, not knowing where the conversation was going from there.

Master continued, "They said, 'He was sick before and maybe he'll get sick again.' "

He paused, allowing a few moments of absolute silence to hang in the night air. Then, "But I looked into your heart and I said, 'He stays.' " After another short pause he closed the conversation with, "Good night, Roy." The flashlight beam was then directed to the ground and the group dispersed. No one said anything for a long time.

Paramahansaji, in the siddha tradition of illumined masters, could read the karmic condition and destiny of disciples. He would say, "I am not interested in organization merely for the sake of having members. An organization like ours, without the honey of God, is of no value. I am only interested in souls."

Dynamic energy movements were manifested in my body within a few weeks of my having met Paramahansaji. I first noticed their actions when I was attending to work duties. Unexpected surges of force would quickly ascend the spinal pathway, then subside. When I sat to meditate, the flows became more pronounced. If I was not completely relaxed when the process occurred, my body would sometimes involuntarily be jerked upright. A brother disciple noticed such occasional body movements and asked me about them. When I described the energy sensations he smiled knowingly. "That's because you are seeing Master frequently," he explained, "and because you are in the environment here."

Yogis refer to the infusion of spiritual forces transmitted by a guru as *shaktipat*: shakti being the vital, expressive manifestation of kundalini. When a receptive disciple enters into a personal relationship with a spiritually awake guru, dormant forces are aroused within the dis-

ciple to the degree that he or she is receptive. This usually occurs spontaneously when circumstances are most appropriate. The guru may also transmit a flow of force through touch, through eyes, or by an act of intention. By experimenting, I found that when I was relaxed during meditation, the surges would occur as though directed by an innate intelligence, without involuntary body movements. Instead, a mild ecstasy was experienced as the currents flowed through deeper levels.

As I became more conscious of subtle transformations within my mind, my intuitive powers became more pronounced. I also became more aware of Master's practice of looking at disciples from time to time, to discern their inner condition and degree of spiritual awareness. He always looked at me that way when I would visit him after a short separation. If I had been meditating deeply and my inner life was well-ordered, he would say, "Look how calm and God-loving you are becoming. Continue doing what you are doing." If I was not as soul-centered as I would have liked to have been, he would say, "Meditate more, Roy. Dive deep in the ocean of God. Pray to God and tell Him, 'Lord, I want nothing but you!' "

At times, when he would have to correct a disciple's behavior, he would say, "I only advise you because I want the best for you. I want you to be as strong as I am."

Paramahansaji would unreservedly give of himself to a disciple in accord to the latter's capacity to receive. With me, he always talked of God and the saints, of life's real purposes, and of the importance of focused dedication on the spiritual path; always enlivening my soul capacities, enriching my mind, and reinforcing my faith. He would occasionally tell me, "You have a wonderful future, Roy!"

A tireless worker for the cause to which he was dedicated, he always directed his attention to the accomplish-

Roy Eugene Davis
in lotus posture:
Phoenix 1953

In the front yard of the first SRF
Phoenix center: *October 1952*

ment of his purposes. Those close to him were often challenged to keep up with his schedule of activities. He slept approximately three hours a night, retiring to his room long after midnight and awakening early to meditate three or four hours before resuming his activities. When involved in projects he gave them his total attention. His only attachments were to God and service to others. Referring to projects and goals he would say, "I always bite off more than I can chew, then I chew it."

When someone once mentioned to him that an endeavor with which he was then involved was not progressing very rapidly, Master remarked, "People sometimes tell me it can't be done, but I notice when the dream begins to come into manifestation everyone wants to join in." Once decided on a course of action, he persisted. If anyone tried to discourage him, he would say, "God told me to do it!"

While writing the manuscript for a book, he acknowledged that Mahavatar Babaji and a legendary Indian saint who lived hundreds of years before were one and the same. A disciple who edited the manuscript told him, "Oh, sir, we can't say that." Master got up from his chair, paced the room like a lion, and demanded, "Why can't we say that? It's true! I only speak the truth!"

After a year of diligent endeavor, when it became obvious that the goat dairy would not be as successful as earlier anticipated, it was sold. I was transferred to the Phoenix center. My duties were to mow and water the lawns, maintain the facilities and prepare the chapel for Sunday services and midweek classes. After a few months I led a Sunday evening discussion group, using Master's printed lessons as the theme. I also taught occasional hatha yoga classes and demonstrated the postures at various service clubs and on local television.

I established a meditation routine which worked well

for me. Waking at three o'clock in the morning, I bathed and went to the chapel. Lighting a single candle on the altar and sitting in a comfortable chair, I alternately chanted and meditated for four hours. Another short meditation was scheduled at noon, and evening practice was usually from six or seven o'clock until ten.

When meditation did not flow easily, I prayed and chanted for a longer duration, until my devotional ardor was aroused and my mind more calm. Whether meditation was rewarding or not, I would always sit for the agreed upon duration of time. Doing this was my personal commitment to God and gurus. Except for occasions when special activities required my attention or when I was asked by Master to visit him in California, this meditation routine was maintained for approximately two years.

Having chosen the cloistered vocation for that phase of my life I was not obligated to cultivate social relationships, nor did I read secular matter or have access to radio or television. For learning and inspiration I read Master's books, the *Bhagavad Gita*, portions of the Bible and biographies of several Christian saints which Master had recommended to me.

On one occasion, impatient because of wanting faster spiritual progress, I talked with Master at his desert retreat. Knowing that I had read about St. Anthony's extended, secluded contemplation before experiencing an enlightenment episode, Master counseled, "Think of St. Anthony, Roy. How patient he was!" At that moment, St. Anthony's travails were not high on my list of priorities to think about in relationship to my own aspirations. However, regardless of my feelings when I went to Master, only a few minutes with him would suffice to renew my self-confidence and elevate my consciousness.

Paramahansaji often said, "Where others leave off in

meditation, there, I am just beginning." He explained to me that meditation techniques were only "tools" to be used for the purpose of calming the mind and internalizing attention, and then were to be discarded. He said that devotion to God was more important than meditation techniques or procedures, but that devotion and meditation techniques, rightly practiced, afforded the devotee of God unlimited opportunity for spiritual growth.

Devotional by nature, yet intent upon knowledge and direct realization of God, I always found my guru's insights and instructions to be valid and practical. Inspired by his example and impelled by my own resolve, I continued my meditations and spiritual practices.

During one of my meditation practice sessions at the Phoenix center, a vivid, cosmic experience unfolded. I had been contemplating for about an hour when, suddenly, my concentration was interrupted by a door being slammed shut by Herbert, who was in the adjoining room. Because of the house rule that quiet should prevail in the building, I was somewhat indignant. Calming myself, I again turned my attention inward. In an instant, I was no longer a devotee endeavoring to meditate; I was a point of awareness in a vast, blue space. My perception was spherical. From my vantage point as a viewpoint of consciousness I could see, simultaneously, in all directions. Tiny, sparkling, white lights glimmered in the field of blue light. The ocean of consciousness in which I rested was calm yet vibrant with aliveness. There was no sense of fear or strangeness, merely a natural awareness of the condition.

After a duration, I do not know how long, I returned to body awareness. Many times, since then, I have experienced similar perceptions during meditation and while hovering at the gap between waking consciousness and twilight sleep.

Yoga literature provides information about a variety of states of consciousness which are accessible to us. At juncture-points between states of consciousness, and between streams of thoughts, it is possible to penetrate more subtle fields of consciousness. For this reason it can be useful to practice observing transitional states of consciousness: from sleep to wakefulness, from awake states to sleep, and at any other time when mental attitudes and mood changes occur during the course of an average day. With practice, the alert observer of mental states and states of consciousness can learn to remain centered in Self-awareness regardless of transitional conditions. Since it is during occasions of unconsciousness or Self-forgetfulness that the soul becomes identified with moods, mental operations and external phenomena, the intentional cultivation of detached observation of all that is other than one's real Self is helpful to spiritual growth.

During prolonged meditations I sometimes saw, in the spiritual eye, luminous personages, some known to me and some I did not recognize. Degrees of cosmic consciousness were spontaneously experienced even when I was engaged in ordinary activities. Conscious of my personality-self, I was also aware of myself and the universe existing in an unbounded field of consciousness. When meditating and at other times, powerful flows of life force flowed through my body, contributing to sensations that caused me to believe that mental faculties were being cleansed and my brain restructured. By experimentation I confirmed the validity of yoga practice, and by spontaneous revelation higher knowledge was revealed.

CHAPTER FOUR

Ordination into an Ancient Tradition

"I ordain you a minister of God and gurus. Teach as I have taught, heal as I have healed, and initiate devotees into Kriya Yoga." With these brief words, charged with the potency of his blessing, did Paramahansa Yogananda ordain me as a representative of an ancient spiritual tradition, in late autumn, 1951.

I was visiting the Self-Realization Fellowship headquarters, along with Herbert Freed, to see Master and attend a special function. The evening before departing for Phoenix, Master invited us to join him for a private talk.

After inquiring about ministry activities in Arizona and advising on certain matters, he asked me to kneel by his chair, placing his hands on my head as I did so, and speaking his words slowly and precisely.

Herbert, expressing surprise about Master's reference to Kriya Yoga initiation, queried him further. "You, too," Master said. "The same God Who is in me is in you. What I have done, you should do."

I was formerly initiated into Kriya Yoga meditation practice by Paramahansaji during the summer of 1950. On that occasion, following the initiation service, at my request he taught me how to see the inner light.

During the initiation service, with over two hundred

devotees present, he expressed his happiness at seeing so many gathered for the occasion, and mentioned his years in Boston in the early nineteen twenties. At that time, he told us, only small groups of persons attended his classes and he had more time to work with each one on a more personal basis, sometimes enabling them to concentrate at the spiritual eye and see its radiance.

Later, when the chapel was empty, except for a few of us who remained behind to remove the extra chairs that had been brought in earlier, he stayed with us, seated before the altar. Remembering his comments about his working with individuals to see the inner light, I approached him, asking that he show me how to do it.

Putting his hands on my forehead, he instructed me to "look into the spiritual eye." I immediately observed two silver-white half-moon lights, floating against the dark blue background of inner space. After a moment, he said, "Look into the distance." As I did so, the two lights began to merge. Just then, I was distracted by a noise, the sound of wooden chairs being stacked, and the lights dispersed.

Master said, "Let's rest a moment." Then, again putting his hands on my forehead, he waited until the two lights appeared to my inner vision and said, "Now, look into the distance." At that moment, the dual lights became one and he removed his hands, remarking, "Now you can see that light anytime you want to."

Prior to initiation (during which a form of dynamic pranayama practice is taught, along with the basic guidelines for living a God-centered life), the truth seeker on the Kriya Yoga path is taught preliminary meditation techniques: prayer, mantra, and contemplation of the inner sound current. In other yoga traditions, different techniques may be emphasized, as determined by the teacher's own experience and understanding.

Paramahansaji never claimed that what he taught originated with him, but that he taught as he had learned from his guru, Sri Yukteswar; who learned from Lahiri Mahasaya what Lahiri had learned from Mahavatar Babaji. Babaji said that he was but reintroducing into the world what had been known in times past, in a way which was suitable to sincere devotees in our era. In recent years it has become fashionable for some yoga teachers to claim that they are offering the "authentic" teaching, sometimes suggesting that Paramahansa Yogananda modified the procedure to make it acceptable to novice truth seekers or persons unable or unwilling to practice as Mahavatar Babaji instructed. Their claims and allegations are not grounded on facts. Master taught the complete process, imparting personal instruction to more advanced disciples when they were receptive.

I, too, teach the complete process as I learned it from Paramahansaji. I do not claim to interpret his teachings because what he taught is what saints and sages have revealed through the ages. What he taught was, of course, filtered through his personality but he always directed disciples to the source, to God, and always honored the great enlightenment traditions which have evolved from the source of all knowledge through the minds of illumined men and women.

On one occasion Herbert explained to him that a few people, who occasionally attended services at the Phoenix center, admitted that they enjoyed the programs but felt they would be more comfortable in a traditional church environment. Master mentioned a certain New Thought church and advised, "Tell them to go there. What is taught there is very similar to what we teach. Tell them that God is everywhere, and within them. If they live right and meditate, they will realize God."

To individuals who resisted the idea of the guru-disciple relationship, erroneously thinking that they would be expected to put the guru between themselves and God, or to disciples who were becoming too personally attached to him, Master would explain, "I am not the real guru. The real guru is God. I am but his servant."

He also said, "Yogananda no longer lives in this body. Only God dwells here now." While functioning through his personality and physical form, Master was grounded in omnipresence.

It was at his desert retreat that I last saw him in the flesh, a few weeks before his conscious transition from the body, which yogis refer to as *mahasamadhi*, "the great oneness."

We were sitting in the living room of his house. It was early evening and he was relaxing in a large reclining chair that Mr. Lynn had given him two years before as a Christmas present. One of the female disciples brought him a small glass of pineapple juice, and waited until he drank it.

When she left the room, he said, "See! For years I have not paid much attention to the body's needs. Now they make me do it. Take care of your body, Roy. You have much work to do."

He was vital and radiant, fairly bubbling over with joy. "I just finished the *Gita*," he told me. "Now my work is finished. Just a little while ago, I was sitting here, meditating. I saw a circle of gold light in the spiritual eye. When I opened my eyes, I saw it there on the wall." He pointed to a place on the wall of the room, near the ceiling. "Then, Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, and Sri Yukteswarji appeared in the light. They were smiling their blessings. They came to thank me for finishing the book. They are pleased with me." He was almost childlike when he told me of the

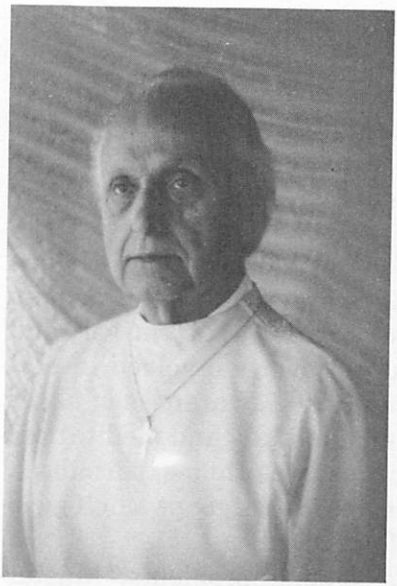
incident, obviously happy to have completed an important project and to have his endeavors acknowledged by the line of gurus.

Directing his complete attention to me he admonished, "Roy, don't be too concerned about the behavior of others, whether or not they seem to you to be dedicated to the path. Just see to it that *you* go all the way. You can do it. You must do it. Sri Yukteswar used to say, 'The boat that carries souls across the river of delusion is ready to depart. Who will go? Who will go? If no one else goes, I will go.' You must be like that."

Master was quiet for a few moments. Then, "Before Sri Yukteswarji passed, we were sitting together and his body suddenly trembled. I asked him what was the matter. He said, 'Just as a caged bird is sometimes hesitant to leave its prison-cage in order to have its freedom, so sometimes the soul is reluctant to leave the body-cage, to renounce confinement in favor of omnipresence.' Do you understand?" I knew he was preparing me for his own soon departure from our midst.

Several months before, he had confided to me and a few other disciples that he was "living on borrowed time" and "had only a few more responsibilities to fulfill." He explained that his life-mission was to establish yoga teachings in the west for present and future generations, and assist disciples to God-realization. He said that he knew his mission when he was young and of certain disciples who would be drawn to him.

During one of our evening walks, in 1950, he told me, "You almost died last year, when you were ill, but your love for God pulled you through. You have a new life now and you must make the most of it." I asked him, "Sir, have I been with you before?" His response was quick: "How could you be with me now if you had not been with me



J. Oliver Black

Roy Eugene Davis
teaching at the
Phoenix SRF center
March 1952

before? Of course, you have been with me before, and you will be with me many times in the future. You have come, as some of the others have, to help me with my work."

An older minister once asked Paramahansaji, "Isn't Roy too new with us to be so far away in Phoenix by himself?" Master admonished him, "You leave my boy alone. I know what I'm doing."

Guidelines for disciples in residence at the various retreat centers were few. We were to be well-groomed, well-mannered, attend to our work duties attentively and cheerfully, friendly to all but not overly involved in personal relationships, cultivate inward awareness of God's presence, and use our free time for study and meditation. The learning and growing process was thus experiential, affording us the opportunity to undergo psychological transformation and soul unfoldment.

"If you are moody or have personal problems," Master would advise, "don't talk about your difficulties with others. Don't poison their minds. Come to me, or someone to whom I send you for advice."

Referring to the training of teachers and ministers, he said, "The most difficult thing is to attract qualified, dedicated people who understand what we are doing and who will remain loyal to the teachings. All too often, they come here thinking that it will be easy to prepare themselves; or they learn a little bit, then want to teach what they think they know instead of what is most real and important."

To me, and a few other young disciples, he counseled: "Prepare yourselves now. Today, thousands of people are seeking God. In the near future, millions will be seeking and there will not be enough God-realized teachers to meet the need. The world is undergoing extreme difficulties now. Don't be concerned about them. A new world

order is coming. God's will, will be done, no matter what individuals here and there do, or do not do. When you are in tune with God's will, you are carried along by it to your own spiritual fulfillment."

During the late evening on March 7, 1952, Herbert telephoned me from Los Angeles to report that Master had just made his transition. He provided a few details and directed me to contact the members of the Phoenix congregation and conduct a memorial at the center. I did this the following day, and then traveled by train to be with my brother and sister disciples.

Upon arrival, I was immediately sent to Master's upstairs apartment bedroom, where his body was reposed on his bed. I was saddened to know that Master would not open his eyes and smile that sweet smile of recognition and welcome. Yet, I was not desolate. He had prepared me for this moment and my inner attunement with his spirit remained. What would be missed would be his gentle voice, the touch of his hand in blessing, and those so endearing interludes of intimate closeness.

Hundreds of disciples and friends gathered in the chapel and reception room at the Mt. Washington headquarters, on March 11, for the public memorial service. Master's body, in a bronze casket, was positioned before the altar. Senior ministers read appropriate scripture selections and performed a simple ceremony. Mr. Lynn spoke for a few moments, as did J. Oliver Black,* another

*J. Oliver Black met Paramahansaji in the late 1930s, became a disciple, and for many years taught weekly classes in Detroit and nearby communities while maintaining his various business activities. In his later years he founded Song of the Morning Ranch, "A Yoga Retreat of Excellence," on a large tract of land in northern Michigan, near Gaylord. In the autumn of 1989 he passed consciously from his body at the age of ninety-six. I was then lecturing in Detroit and drove to Song of the Morning Ranch to attend his memorial service.

longtime businessman-disciple from Detroit, Michigan. Mr. Benay R. Sen, India's ambassador to the United Nations, for whom only a few days before Master had hosted an informal dinner, delivered a heartfelt eulogy. During it he mentioned that as he and his travel party were being driven to the summit of Mt. Washington, they had seen a rainbow over the mountain, which he felt to be an auspicious sign.

At the conclusion of the service, devotees were invited to walk slowly by the casket to view Master's countenance for the final time. We dropped rose petals on the glass covering while chanting in unison, "Om guru, Om guru." The casket was then taken to Forest Lawn Memorial-Park a few miles away.

I sought a secluded place behind the main building, to be alone with my thoughts and compose myself. Later, I encountered Mr. Black, who shared private words of comfort and understanding.

We had celebrated Paramahansaji's fifty-ninth birthday with him just two months prior to his passing. During the banquet he shared his vision for us and for the continuing growth of the work. On his birthdays, and at Christmas, he was often gifted with a variety of presents. These he graciously accepted, keeping some if they could be utilized, and often privately giving away what he did not need or what others could use.

A few days before his passing he had been unusually busy. Returning from the desert retreat on the 4th of March, he spent some time with Ambassador Sen and his group and had private talks with senior disciples. On the 6th of March he asked to be driven to the Pacific Palisades Lake Shrine. There, he inspected the grounds and had lunch with a few disciples. In the chapel, he sat at the organ and played several chants. Repeatedly, with the

disciples, he chanted the words written years before by the Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore: "In my house with Thine own hands light the lamp of Thy love." After six hours at the Lake Shrine he returned to Mt. Washington Estates.

Herbert Freed had traveled from Phoenix to see Master about ministry matters and went with him to and from Pacific Palisades. Herbert later told me of their conversations, during which Master had enthusiastically shared his creative ideas. "Just think of it!" he said. "I have an opportunity to start another work in the midwest, very similar to this one but which would not at all interfere with what we do here." He did not elaborate further at that time but may have been referring to Oliver Black's plan to develop a yoga retreat and spiritual community.

On March 7, Master remained in his apartment in meditative silence. That afternoon he was driven to the Biltmore Hotel in downtown Los Angeles and went to a room that had been earlier reserved for him. "Imagine!" he exclaimed, "I have a room at the Biltmore!" He was remembering his first stay there, in 1925, when he lectured for several weeks in an overflowing auditorium across the street from the hotel. Three thousand people had come to hear him then, and several thousand more had to be turned away because of lack of space.

Master had been invited to sit at the speaker's table that evening, at a banquet in honor of Ambassador Sen by The Indian Association of America, a southern California organization. Two hundred and forty persons were in attendance. To conclude the program, several speakers were presented. When Master was introduced, he spoke quietly, as though choosing his words carefully, of his ideal of universal harmony and cooperation between nations of the world; ending his talk by quoting from one of his

poems, *My Mother India*. Upon completion of the final line—"I am hallowed, my body touched that sacred sod"—he turned slightly to his right and slid to the floor.

His last personal comment, made to a person sitting beside him as he stood to go to the microphone was, "Life has its roses and its thorns, and we must accept both."

In August of that year, newspapers and magazines around the world informed their readers of a report released by the directors of Forest Lawn Memorial-Park:

> The absence of any signs of decay in the dead body of Paramahansa Yogananda offers the most extraordinary case in our experience. Had the muscle protein and bloodstream of the deceased not been comparatively free of bacteria, deterioration of the body could have set in as early as six hours after life had departed. No physical disintegration was visible in Paramahansa Yogananda's body even twenty days after death.

Because two members of the India-based branch of Self-Realization Fellowship were expected to come to America to view Master's remains, the casket was closed with a glass lid but not sealed for approximately three weeks. When their trip was delayed, final procedures were completed and the casket placed in a prepared crypt. Fresh flowers are provided daily in the alcove and the site serves as a place of pilgrimage for visiting devotees.

As I prepared to depart for Phoenix after Master's memorial service, Faye Wright* informed me that it was

*Faye Wright (now Sister Daya Mata) was seventeen years of age when she met Paramahansaji (circa 1931) in Salt Lake City, Utah, where her guru was lecturing. Soon thereafter, she entered the monastic order in Los Angeles. Through the years she was assigned more organizational responsibilities, being appointed to the position of President of Self-Realization Fellowship and its spiritual director in 1955.

his wish, expressed to her earlier, that I be installed as the minister of the Phoenix center and that Herbert remain in California.

My routine in Phoenix was maintained as before, with the addition of presiding at Sunday and midweek services and occasionally counseling some of the members. Master had always given the Phoenix center special consideration. Dedicating it in 1948, he nurtured its progress with loving attention.

During the summer of 1953 I began to ponder the idea of withdrawing from the monastic vocation. My devotion to God and respect for Master's organization remained undiminished but I felt the need for experience in the secular world. After much soul-searching, I met with Faye to discuss the matter. She told me in confidence of some of the decisions she had faced over the years and provided me wise counsel.

We explored the possibility of my moving to another city where, after I was settled and self-sufficient, I might organize a study group and continue to share the teachings. In the meantime, I was to continue as minister of the Phoenix center until I was fully decided upon a course of action.

A few months later, with some uncertainty but with Master's words—"Roy, you have a wonderful future"—clear in my mind and heart, I resigned from the organization while opening my consciousness to whatever evidence of good fortune God's grace was to provide.

CHAPTER FIVE

Years of Growth and Grace

The words from one of Rabindranath Tagore's prose writings* perfectly describe the mood that dominated my thoughts for several months following my decision to leave the cloistered life:

> That which oppresses me, is it my soul trying to come out in the open, or the soul of the world knocking at my door for its entrance.

Alone, without friends or funds and lacking experience in practical, secular world relationships and activities, I did not know how or where to begin putting my personal affairs in order. Within a matter of weeks I received in the mail a notice to appear for a physical examination, to test my worthiness to be drafted into military service. While there, I volunteered for immediate induction into the U.S. Army Medical Corps. After basic and advanced training, I completed the required two years of service providing hospital patient care at Fort Knox, Kentucky, and Fort Riley, Kansas. When off duty I maintained a regular, personal program of study and meditation.

In 1955, while at Fort Riley, I read in the *Kansas City Star* newspaper, news of the transition of Mr. Lynn. A

**Stray Birds.*

series of front-page articles described his many years as an exemplary citizen and leader in the midwest business community.

James Jesse Lynn was born May 5, 1882, near Archibald, Louisiana, into poor circumstances. His father worked on a cotton farm to earn a living for the family. By age fourteen James Lynn was working to earn money. When he was seventeen he traveled by train to Kansas City, Missouri, found work, finished his high school studies by correspondence, went to law school, and studied accounting. He was admitted to the bar and became a certified public accountant during his twenty-first year. He married in 1913 and was assigned accounting work for the U.S. Epperson Underwriting Company. Within a very few years he was promoted to the position of general manager and shortly thereafter, with the help of a large loan from a banker friend, purchased the company. That was the beginning of his exceptional business career. He later formed another insurance company, invested heavily in railroads and a bank, bought a citrus grove in Texas, and drilled for oil on leased land. By the mid-1940s the annual business income was several millions of dollars.

His residence, when he was not traveling and otherwise involved with business projects, was a one hundred acre, forested estate with a nine-hole golf course.

With all of his financial success, Mr. Lynn later told of how he was nervous and restless, and unsatisfied. In January of 1932 Paramahansaji visited Kansas City to present a series of lectures and at that time Mr. Lynn met his guru. So receptive was he that, the very first time Master sat with him and taught him meditation techniques, he experienced a high superconscious state. The impulse of soul destiny, and his personal initiative and commitment to excellence produced his material success;

God's grace and Master's influence awakened his spiritual capacities and nurtured his spiritual growth.

Faithful to his spiritual practices while attending to increasing business responsibilities, Mr. Lynn visited California as often as he could, to be with Paramahansaji and meditate in seclusion. He voluntarily assumed many of the financial needs of Master's work. When Master was in India in 1935-36, Mr. Lynn surprised him on his return by presenting him with the beautiful ocean view retreat facility at Encinitas, California, where they both later spent much time together.

During the summer of 1951 Master publicly bestowed upon Mr. Lynn the monastic name Rajarsi Janakananda. The title Rajarshi, from Sanskrit *raja* and *rishi*, means "royal saint or seer." Janaka was a great king of ancient India who was also known for his saintly qualities. At that time Master announced that Mr. Lynn was his choice to succeed him as spiritual director of the organization after his passing.

Paramahansaji told disciples that Mr. Lynn was a God-realized soul. On one occasion he said, "St. Lynn has mastered preliminary samadhi states and is rapidly accomplishing the higher states. He will be liberated in this lifetime."

One late evening, I was visiting Master in his apartment. Dressed in pajamas, he had the bedspread pulled up to his chest and was reclining against a pillow. He told me of how, years before on the ocean beach at Encinitas, he had assisted Mr. Lynn to experience a transcendental state of consciousness.

"We were meditating," Master said, "and I saw that he was receptive. So I touched him on the chest with my hand and he lost body consciousness, so absorbed in the Spirit was he. I watched him very carefully for a long time, until

Interior of Shrine of All Faiths Meditation Temple
Center for Spiritual Awareness, Lakemont, Georgia

he came back to ordinary consciousness."

At that moment Mr. Lynn, who was in residence, came into the room to say good night to Master. He had been meditating and was radiant. Master exclaimed, "I've just been telling Roy about your first nirbikalpa samadhi experience." Mr. Lynn smiled, acknowledged me with a glance, then went to Master and kissed him on the forehead before quietly leaving the room.

When he was gone, Master told me,"St. Lynn has fulfilled all of my expectations for him. He is a perfect example for you and the others." He then told me of how Mr. Lynn had successfully overcome his last major personal test in relationship to material things.

"When we acquired the Lake Shrine," he began, "I wanted us to have that piece of property above it so some one else would not buy it in the future and spoil our privacy." He mentioned the price, which may have been a substantial one for the early 1950s, but was modest in comparison to today's real estate values.

"During all our years together we very seldom discussed money matters. When he came here to be with us I wanted him to be free of business concerns and to only have thoughts of God, and meditate. But I knew he had one remaining attachment and I had to rid him of it for his own spiritual good. So I chose the property purchase as an opportunity for him to confront it.

"We were sitting alone one day and I mentioned the property to him. I said, 'Will you buy it for me?' He was shocked because I had never before directly asked him such a thing. He couldn't look at me. Finally, he did, and tears were in his eyes. He said, 'Yes, sir, I will.' When he said that, he overcame his last little attachment. He will be liberated now. Not because of the money but because he has renounced all attachments to material things."

After Paramahansaji's passing, Mr. Lynn assumed the dual roles of president and spiritual director of the work but did not presume to play the role of guru to disciples. Divesting himself of all business responsibilities, he purchased a large tract of land near Borrego Springs in southern California, living there when he was not in residence at one of the Self-Realization Fellowship retreats. Always keenly interested in holistic living, he was a strict vegetarian and hired a manager to oversee the growing of vegetables on his Borrego Springs farm.

After withdrawing from business involvements he devoted almost all of his time and attention to inner, spiritual work. He shared, with a few disciples, an experience he had in 1953.

For many years his meditations were blissful and often of cosmic proportions. On one occasion, however, for several days he experienced an unusual lack of soul awareness, as though his spiritual growth had been blocked. Persisting in his meditation endeavors, he finally experienced perception of an inner light. Then he became the light, which expanded until it included the cosmos and became infinite. After that experience he said, "Now I know I am not the body. There is only light. There is only the Infinite. It does not matter now whether I have a body or not. My realization of the One is permanent."

Two years earlier, when the Lake Shrine was dedicated, he was present. After the service, visitors remained on the grounds to enjoy fellowship with one another and to talk with Master. I was standing by the lake, next to a path which encircled it, when Mr. Lynn approached me. No words were exchanged. He placed his left hand on my forehead and his right hand over my heart, and closed his eyes. A gentle surge of spiritual force flowed into my breast and expanded throughout my body. Thoughts ceased as

sheer joy became dominant. After a few moments he stepped back, smiled gently, and walked over to where Master was surrounded by disciples and friends.

This beautiful, saintly soul passed from the material world February 20, 1955, at his home in Borrego Springs. A decade before, at a gathering of devotees, he told them:

> If we are at peace within our being, we can harmoniously carry on our duties even in the business sphere. We can accomplish admirable things in the world without necessarily clashing with others. After our day's work is done we can retire within to be with God. Eventually, even in the business world, we can perform all our duties with the full consciousness of God's presence. If we are calm and peaceful, come what may—success or seeming failure—we remain even-minded, feeling the certainty that His will is being done. If we could gain the whole world and have nothing else but the world, we would not find happiness. Earthly possessions cannot bestow peace and joy. God can.

Reading the news of my brother disciple's transition refreshed my memories of occasional associations with him and focused my attention on my own priorities: what course of action to take when my military duties terminated a few months hence.

During a week long leave of absence from Fort Riley I visited Denver, Colorado, considering it as a possible place to live and begin a teaching ministry. My plans at the time included going to a chiropractic college, to become established in a suitable profession compatible with my philosophical views and to provide my material needs. I wrote a letter to Faye Wright, who had succeeded Mr. Lynn as head of Master's work, telling her of my plans and explaining that I would soon be ready to represent the teaching in

that region of the country.

Several weeks later her formal response on behalf of the board of directors arrived in the mail. The letter informed me that they did not want me to represent the work in any capacity. There was no explanation for their decision.

For almost two years I had formulated plans based on the belief that I would be able to teach under the auspices of the organization. Now, with Mr. Lynn gone and board members—some of whom did not personally know me—having decided otherwise, new plans had to be made and soon implemented.

Regardless of the personal opinions some individuals comprising a corporate board might have had, I was still Master's disciple and had been authorized by him to teach. A few months later when my military duties were terminated, I moved to Denver, located a lecture hall and placed modest advertisements in local newspapers. Several dozen interested people attended my lecture series, some of them continuing to participate in the weekly classes that followed.

I conceived an idea for what I felt to be an extremely worthwhile venture—a spiritual training center in the Rocky Mountains. Almost everyone with whom I shared the dream thought it a splendid one; however, personal involvement and financial participation were not forthcoming. The vision of "what could be" was clear in my mind but my consciousness and practical skills were not yet sufficient to allow the dream to unfold in fact. Two decades later it did blossom—not on the craggy slopes of Colorado but in the quiet, wooded foothills of the Appalachian Mountains of northeast Georgia.

I remained in Denver for a year, teaching regular, small classes and writing and publishing a few booklets.

The printed word, always helpful to me, seemed a natural ministry outreach service.

A woman who attended my classes arranged for me to meet Joel S. Goldsmith when he visited the city while on a lecture tour. A former salesman and later a prominent Christian Science practitioner before becoming an independent truth teacher, Joel was a dedicated truth seeker and teacher. We met in his hotel suite at the Brown Palace Hotel in downtown Denver.

"I knew your guru," he told me. "We were spiritual friends." He confided that Paramahansaji had initiated him into Kriya Yoga meditation practices and extended an open invitation for him to stay at the Encinitas retreat whenever he wanted to do so for the purpose of meditation. Years later I learned that Joel and his wife had hosted Paramahansaji in their home near Boston during Master's visits there in the late 1920s.

Joel invited me to meditate with him for a few minutes, after which he exclaimed, "Why, Roy, your master is right here with you! You can reach out and touch him anytime!"

Because Joel's awakened spiritual consciousness had enabled him to also realize professional success, I asked him how to proceed with my ministry endeavors; especially about how to demonstrate funding to make possible the several projects I had in mind.

He chuckled and said, "Why, Roy, it's all around you. All you have to do is reach out and take it!"

We maintained our spiritual friendship by occasional exchanges of letters and random meetings in various cities when our respective travel schedules coincided. He made his transition in 1964 while on a teaching visit to London, England.

Ministering to a small group of sincere truth seekers in Denver was rewarding, but at the same time confining. My

soul mission, I knew, was to spiritually assist devotees of God the world over—but how to proceed and what was to unfold was not completely clear in my mind. I prayed about the matter and opened myself to guidance.

A leader of a metaphysical center in Seattle, Washington, read one of my booklets and invited me to speak there, which I did for several weeks. From him and others I learned of other groups on the west coast and offered my services, traveling and speaking through Oregon and into southern California.

While in Los Angeles I met several spiritual teachers: Ernest Holmes at the Science of Mind Institute; Neville Goddard, who was lecturing in the Wilshire Boulevard district; Manly Palmer Hall, whose philosophical knowledge was vast; Ernest Wilson of Unity Church; and Walter C. Lanyon, independent writer and lecturer. All of them knew of Master and some had memories of their personal meetings, which they readily shared.

In late spring of 1958 I accepted an invitation to speak in Miami, Florida. There I lectured four nights a week and twice each Sunday for six weeks, and was interviewed by newspaper reporters and radio talk show hosts, including Larry King who was then just beginning his professional career. Before leaving Los Angeles, Walter Lanyon, with whom I discussed my plans, told me: "Go! The Spirit of God will go before you and everything will unfold in divine order." His prophecy proved correct.

From Miami I traveled to Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, New York City, Detroit, and several Ohio cities. As the lecture tour progressed, I became increasingly aware of the Larger Something expressing through and around me. Events unfolded in orderly sequence and unplanned opportunities were presented. With no organizational affiliation and only my sense of destiny, awareness of God,

inner guidance and enthusiasm, I learned by experience how to trust the universe. At times it seemed that circumstances were preordained. I was aware of existing in a field of Universal Mind and often viewed my relationships and activities as one might perceive a lucid dream, fully aware of being involved with the process while retaining an objective point of view.

As the years passed I experienced that, so long as I looked with faith to the source of all good, to God, and remained true to my calling to serve others, resources necessary to fulfill purposes were always provided.

For millions of people in the world, including many sincere devotees of God, a major problem is a lack of necessities while living in a universe abounding in substance and opportunity. Why, in a world of abundance, do we experience the frustration of limitation? The solution to the problem is in our own consciousness and related to our attitudes and behaviors.

Spiritual masters have not neglected the teaching of prosperity principles or the demonstration of them. Mahavatar Babaji told a disciple, "Few people in mortal consciousness know that the fullness of Reality extends to the material plane."

As it is in subtle spheres where soul awareness may be less restricted by illusory considerations about the characteristics of matter, so it can be in this world when misperceptions and illusions no longer contribute to ignorance of natural laws. Jesus, too, taught the solution to the problem of lack.*

*"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (*The Gospel According to Saint Matthew 6:33.*) A modern paraphrase of the scripture verse is: "Seek first knowledge and realization of God, and learn how to be in harmony with the principles of right living; and all pure desires will be fulfilled and real needs satisfied by God *through* and *as* the universe."

Paramahansaji said, "Prosperity does not mean always getting what you want when you want it, but in having what you need when you need it. I can honestly say that, whenever I needed anything, it was there!"

As I became better known through my lectures and writings, I was invited to speak for larger, more established groups. Ten years after Master's passing, a resurgence of interest in yoga and other Eastern teachings began to manifest. In the early 1890s Swami Vivikananda, the renowned disciple of the Indian Bengali saint, Sri Ramakrishna, made a powerful impact upon Western consciousness with his dynamic personality and stirring talks. Shortly thereafter, with little public knowledge because he preferred to work quietly, the enlightened sage Govinda Bharati, who later assumed the name Shivapuri Baba and retired to a forest ashram in Nepal, traveled the globe for forty years, including America on his schedule.

When Paramahansaji came to America in 1920 and began his public work a few years later, he was met with tremendous enthusiasm as thousands of men and women filled the largest auditoriums of dozens of major cities to learn yoga principles and procedures. My guru said that yoga practices and meditation would eventually be taught in public schools and colleges and seriously investigated and researched by medical doctors and scientists. In the closing decades of the 20th century this began to happen, and responsible media persons began reporting the positive benefits.

Until 1963 my ministry activities were confined to North America. Early that year a friend gave me a copy of a book written by Dr. Masaharu Taniguchi, founder and spiritual head of a two million-member enlightenment movement in Japan. I was impressed with the author's emphasis that "each person is a child of God and in truth

lives now in a world of Reality."

I mailed a personal letter to Dr. Taniguchi along with a gift copy of one of my books. I received a letter from the international department of Seicho-No-Ie,* Dr. Taniguchi's organization with headquarters in Tokyo, requesting my assistance. Dr. Taniguchi was planning his first world tour and several New Thought groups in America were sponsoring some of his lecture programs. By contacting friends in New York City and Washington D.C. I was able to assist in making his appearances possible in those cities.

In the nation's capitol, the sponsoring church arranged a special luncheon for Dr. Taniguchi and his travel party and we had an opportunity to become personally acquainted.

"How would you like to come to Japan next year?" he inquired of me. "We will translate and publish your book and make all arrangements for you to speak in several cities." My response was affirmative and a tentative schedule was decided upon for September of that year.

What a tumultuous welcome greeted me when I arrived at the airport near Tokyo! Looking through the window of the airplane as it came to a stop I saw a crowd of people on the roof of the terminal, waving small American and Japanese flags. Disembarking, I was met by Reverend Tamura and other Seicho-No-Ie representatives. The main room of the terminal was filled with people waving to me and holding their flags aloft. Photographers took pictures as beautiful flower bouquets were heaped into my arms.

For the next two days I rested between arranged

**House of Growth*. Also described as "Home of Infinite Life, Truth and Abundance."

Left:
Dr. Masaharu Taniguchi, the founder of Seicho-No-Ie

Below:
Arrival in Sao Paulo, Brazil, to speak for Seicho-No-Ie groups in eight cities

sightseeing tours of Tokyo, and luncheons and dinners during which I renewed my friendship with Dr. Taniguchi and met members of the Seicho-No-Ie executive board and several department supervisors.

The first scheduled lecture was in Tokyo on a Monday afternoon. When I asked my interpreter, Reverend Haruo Shibuya, if people would really attend a public meeting at such a time, he laughed and said, "Anytime Dr. Taniguchi speaks, the people will come. You will see."

Two thousand men and women filled the auditorium. Huge American and Japanese flags adorned the rear wall of the stage. The national anthems of both countries were broadcast through the sound system and special guests were introduced. Dr. Taniguchi presented me with copies of his books and my newly published book in Japanese translation, along with a certificate and lapel pin designating me as an honorary minister of Seicho-No-Ie.

I was then introduced to the audience and delivered a prepared lecture, translated by Reverend Shibuya. After a short rest break, Dr. Taniguchi spoke for approximately two hours. The entire program lasted almost four hours, which I later discovered was usual for such meetings.

For the remainder of the tour I traveled by train with Reverend Shibuya and Dr. Tokuhisa, a senior minister of the movement, to Nagoya, Kyoto, Nara, Yokohama, and other cities. At each, we were met at the train station by local Seicho-No-Ie leaders and representatives, escorted to Shinto and Buddhist shrines, and presented public lectures. I spoke for an hour at each meeting and Dr. Tokuhisa concluded the sessions with inspired talks.

On the final day, before boarding my Japan Airlines flight to Honolulu and Los Angeles, I joined a small gathering for lunch at Dr. Taniguchi's home in the suburbs of Tokyo. I requested permission to write his biography for

the West and he readily consented. It was later published in America, Japan, and Brazil under the title *Miracle Man of Japan** and has since been used in all North American Seicho-No-Ie centers as an introduction to Dr. Taniguchi's work and teaching.

The last time I saw this unusual man was during my second lecture tour of Japan in 1978. I visited him at his home, then near Nagasaki and not far from the recently constructed Seicho-No-Ie Shrine and Training School. Frail at that time, he was clear-minded and spiritually vibrant. Holding my hands in his strong grip, he assured me, "The body is a little tired now, but the spirit is strong!"

In June, 1985, a Seicho-No-Ie representative in Los Angeles telephoned to report that Dr. Taniguchi had made his transition the day before. A few days later, a letter from Reverend Shibuya arrived, in which further details were provided.

In his ninety-second year, Dr. Taniguchi had been hospitalized for just a few days before he made his transition. Shortly before, he prepared a message for all members of his movement: "Illness does not exist. This is the fundamental truth of Seicho-No-Ie. God will now permit me to restfully sleep." His son-in-law, Mr. Seicho Taniguchi, succeeded him as president and spiritual head of the organization.

In 1965 I moved from Los Angeles to Florida, choosing as my place of residence the quiet community of Treasure Island, adjacent to St. Petersburg and near the Gulf of Mexico. I continued to travel, usually visiting twenty to thirty cities a year, wrote several books, began sending monthly lessons to a growing number of disciples and truth seekers, and started publication of *Truth Journal*

*CSA Press, 1970.

With Center for Spiritual Awareness members in Accra, Ghana
During lecture visit in 1987

magazine as a major outreach endeavor.

While presenting a series of classes in Atlanta, Georgia in 1968, I met Edwin and Lois O'Neal from Lakemont, Georgia, a small mountain community ninety miles north, near the borders of North Carolina and South Carolina. A few years earlier they had purchased a ten-acre site near Lake Rabun for the purpose of developing a retreat center. To fund the venture a publishing business was established. They offered to publish and distribute my books, and invited me to conduct classes and workshops during their summer retreat seasons.

I continued to write and lecture, while focusing more on seminars and retreat programs during which deeper teachings were transmitted, and receptive individuals were initiated into preliminary and advanced Kriya Yoga meditation practices.

Paramahansaji's ideal of promoting practical how-to-live principles and basic guidelines for spiritual growth to large numbers of people while, at the same time, being ever alert to recognizing devotees with special qualities who could be encouraged to experience more rapid spiritual growth, coincided with my own. He often said, "I prefer a God-loving soul to a crowd of people but I love crowds of God-loving souls."

CHAPTER SIX

To India, as a Pilgrim

Bharatavarsha, "the land of the descendents of Bharata," is the name used by the people of India when referring to their country.*

A landmass approximately half the size of the United States, excluding Alaska, India is home to upwards of one billion people. It is also considered by informed scholars and historians to be the fountainhead of religion, philosophy, art, medicine, mathematics, and other refinements of human discovery which have contributed to the culturing of many societies the world over.

Comprising a diversity of languages and customs, nurturing memories of past glories and visions of future accomplishments, and only in the past two hundred years discovered anew by intellectually curious people of the West, India's real treasure—its vast body of spiritual knowledge—is now being more openly appreciated.

Only pseudointellectual snobbishness and shallow pride in one's misguided opinion of superiority forms a barrier to learning from sources other than those conventional and convenient. All cultures, and most individuals, have something of real value to share with us when we are

*Bharata was a celebrated hero-monarch of ancient times.

open to learning and discovery.

During the early autumn of 1972 I visited India for the first time. I did not go with preconceived notions but as an act of devotion, wanting to experience its spirit and culture directly and privately.

While lecturing in southern California earlier that year I was invited to participate on a radio talk show with two other guests. A Russian-born woman, who had assumed the name Indra Devi when she began teaching hatha yoga years before, was one of the guests. When invited by the moderator to share some of her knowledge of India she told of her teacher, Sri Satya Sai Baba, who, she said, was considered by millions of people there to be a saint and worker of miracles.

Several weeks later, a radio producer in Florida with whom I was discussing broadcasting possibilities, loaned me a book about Satya Sai Baba, which provided more detailed information. I learned that the holy man was born in 1926 in a small village ninety miles north of Bangalore, in the southern region of India. At an early age he attracted attention because of his spiritual qualities. He also demonstrated exceptional abilities to know things about people and to diagnose and cure their ailments. An unusual phenomenon was his ability to materialize objects in his hand by mere will or intention.

At the age of fourteen he announced to his incredulous parents that he was the reincarnation of a then legendary sage, Sai Baba of Shirdi, who had left his body eight years before Satya Sai Baba was born. Also, at that time, he stopped going to public school and left his parent's home to live with a nearby relative who was more supportive of him and his behaviors. He began to conduct regular devotional meetings and serve the spiritual needs of devotees. With the passage of years, his fame spread

throughout India and increasing numbers of people sought him out.

In September of that year, while again lecturing in southern California, mutual friends introduced me to Walter and Elsie Cowan, an older couple who had accepted Satya Sai Baba as their guru and founded a publishing company in America to print and distribute books and literature about him and his work.

"We'll be in India in October," Elsie informed me. "Why don't you come along with us?" I explained that my travel plans for the remainder of the year were not yet firm but that I would keep her invitation in mind.

Less than a month later I was in New York City to present a weekend seminar. On a Monday morning, partly out of curiosity, I went to the Air India ticket office and inquired about prices and schedules for round-trip flights between New York and Bombay. Upon discovering that I could be booked on a flight that evening at a modest price, I purchased tickets and went to the Indian Consulate to apply for a visa. Thirty-six hours later I was in Bombay.

Because of a one-hour delay in Rome, my arrival in Bombay was too late for the scheduled connection to Bangalore. I was given a voucher good for a day's stay at the downtown Taj Mahal Hotel and told to return to the airport late in the afternoon for my ongoing flight.

After a brief rest, I went to the hotel lobby to arrange transportation to the airport. God's travel schedule was precise, for there in the lobby was Elsie Cowan! She had not known of my last-minute decision to be in India and I had not known her specific travel plans. During our happy reunion she informed me that she and Walter had arrived the day before and would be in Bangalore the following morning at the West End Hotel, where she recommended that I also stay.

After breakfast at the West End Hotel I decided to hire a taxi for the fifteen mile journey to the nearby Whitefield community, where Satya Sai Baba was in residence on the campus of one of his schools for boys.

Arriving there, from my roadside vantage point I observed a group of approximately one hundred people sitting under a banyan tree in the middle of an open field. Satya Sai Baba was walking among them, occasionally stopping before a devotee to share a few words, now and then moving his right hand as though stirring the air to materialize a small object as a token of his blessing.

Returning to my hotel I was soon met by Walter and Elsie, along with Indra Devi and a few others who came from America to be with Baba. Elsie reported: "We told Baba about you and he wants you to come with us tonight for a six o'clock meeting with him."

My initial encounter with Satya Sai Baba was pleasant. About a dozen of us sat on the porch floor of his residence and he soon joined us, entering from a front room, smiling a greeting and sitting down close to us. It was a serene group interaction as he talked, asked and answered questions, and openly shared himself. At one point he turned to me and said, "You know, it's not enough to be a disciple of a great master. One must become like the master."

A few minutes later while he was directing his attention to another person, I suddenly remembered a vivid dream I had about him a few weeks before. Now, before me, his appearance, tone of voice and the way he moved, seemed an exact reproduction of the dream encounter. Immediately, he glanced in my direction to pronounce: "Everything is imagination," then turned his attention back to the person with whom he had been talking.

Paramahansaji had often described the universe as an

imaginal phenomenon produced in Cosmic Mind. "When you awake in God," he would say, "you will see the world as a dream happening, a projection of ideas against the screen of space and time."

The next day, we were invited to spend several hours at Baba's house, sometimes talking with him and at other times waiting while he interviewed visitors or went out briefly to meet with groups of devotees.

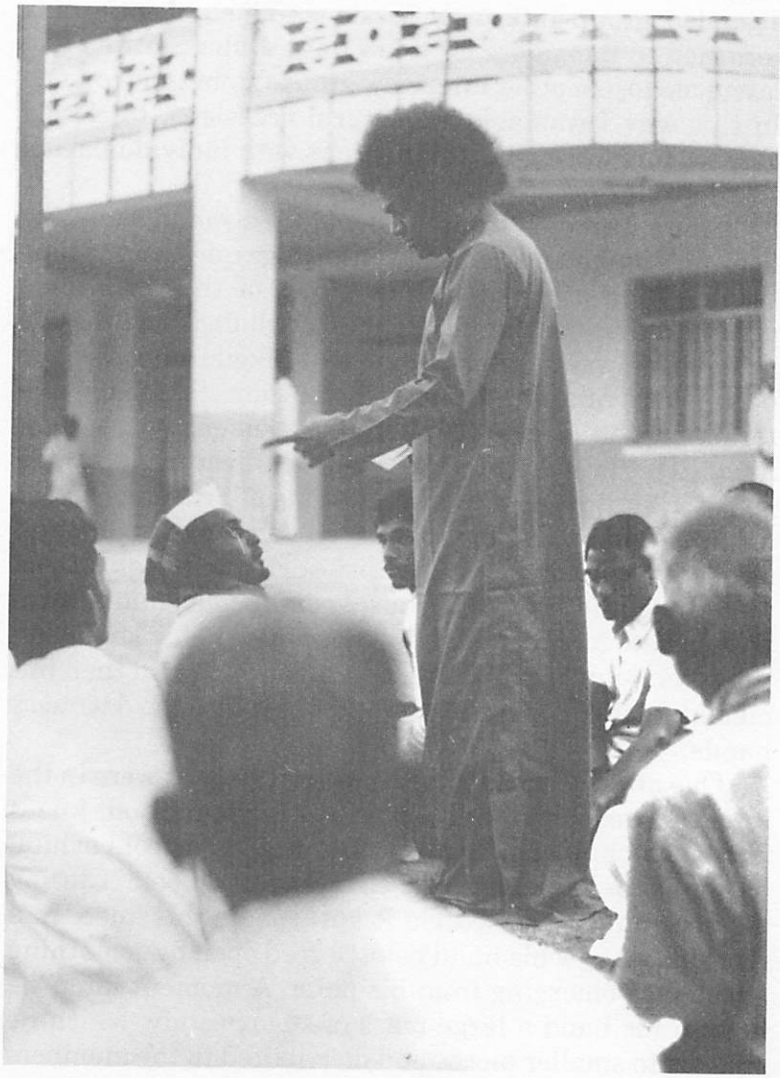
In the afternoon, I was with the Cowans as they talked with Baba about their activities in California. Elsie had a long list of questions which, because of her failing eyesight, I read to Baba. After a while, he called Professor Gokak, then director of Baba's colleges and schools, and asked Elsie to direct her questions to him. "Whatever questions he doesn't answer, I will, when I come back," he told her as he left the room.

Within the hour he returned. Almost all of Elsie's questions had been answered to her satisfaction. She asked Baba for permission to have a small book of his sayings, which until then had only been available in India, published in America. Permission was readily granted and I was assigned the responsibility of having it edited and published.*

On the third day several cars filled with devotees and visitors followed Baba's car as it was driven through the countryside from Bangalore to Prashanti Nilayam, "the abode of peace," his main ashram near the village of his birth.

I was assigned a small cottage on the ashram grounds, near the main entrance, and not far from the small temple compound where Baba lived and devotees gathered to meet him each morning and evening. Because I was with

**Teachings of Sri Satya Sai Baba*, CSA Press, Lakemont, Georgia.



Sri Satya Sai Baba with devotees
at Whitefield, near Bangalore
1972

the Cowans I was invited to sit with them whenever they attended group interview sessions. When the Cowans returned to Bangalore for a few days, Baba continued to invite me to join other interview groups from time to time. In this way I was able, on several occasions, to closely observe him during his interactions with individuals and small groups.

Group interviews were informal. We would sit on the floor with Baba and he would encourage questions, sometimes taking a person to the corner of the room for a private discussion. He invariably concluded each session by having everyone stand while he walked from person to person for a final word of blessing or counsel, usually materializing an object with a deft movement of his right hand. The gift might be a gold or silver ring with a gemstone or image of a saint, a string of prayer beads, or a small quantity of fine, powdered ash for the person to swallow for its medicinal qualities. His materializations were effortless, instantaneous, spontaneous, and always appropriate to the individual's need or secret wish. Sometimes he would ask, "What can I give you?", and then immediately produce the object and put it into the devotee's hands.

One afternoon, only five American visitors were in the interview room with Baba. I sat at his left side, our knees almost touching. Looking at a man directly in front of him, he raised his left hand, palm open, saying, "Look!" Closing his hand into a fist he held it upturned at his knee. In a moment we saw his hand being forced open by something which was emerging from his palm. A moment later, he held in his hand a large mass of sugar candy, which he broke into smaller pieces and distributed to the members of the group. Noting a small towel on the floor beside Baba, I handed it to him to wipe the candy residue from his hand.

He did so, then slapped my leg and said, "Everything is 'one thing.' Do you agree?" I did.

Baba's ability to command subtle element-principles of Nature to form any substance he may desire is not due to any specific yoga training undergone in his present incarnation. He was born with knowledge to accomplish his purposes. When asked how he is able to materialize things he says, "I will a thing to appear and it does." To one inquirer he confided, "I cannot explain it to you, to your satisfaction. You can do it, too, when you learn how. When you do, you won't be able to explain it to anyone either." He says his will, his intention, is immediately manifested because he has self-confidence: by that, he means conviction grounded in realization of the true Self.

On another occasion, a young man from Madras, southeast of Prashanti Nilayam, gave Baba a handwritten letter from his wife who was in a hospital suffering from cancer. Baba glanced at the letter, looked at the enclosed snapshot, and was quiet for a moment. Then he said, "I'll take care of it." When Baba says that, the healing process can begin immediately, no matter where in the world the person resides.

At the conclusion of that session, Baba went to each person in the room and materialized something for them. When he approached the man who had given him the letter, the man held out his hands as though expecting a materialized gift from Baba. Instead, Baba patted the man on the shoulder, saying, "I have already given your wife back to you."

Turning to me he asked, "When are you leaving?" I had been thinking of departing the following afternoon but had not discussed the matter with anyone. When I informed him of my plans he told me to see him early the next morning.

Late that evening I walked the ashram grounds. I knew that Baba would ask me if I wanted anything from him. I had no philosophical questions to ask or problems to have solved and, as a representative of my guru line, was not looking for another teacher. I planned merely to express my appreciation for his hospitality and kindness, which had been generous.

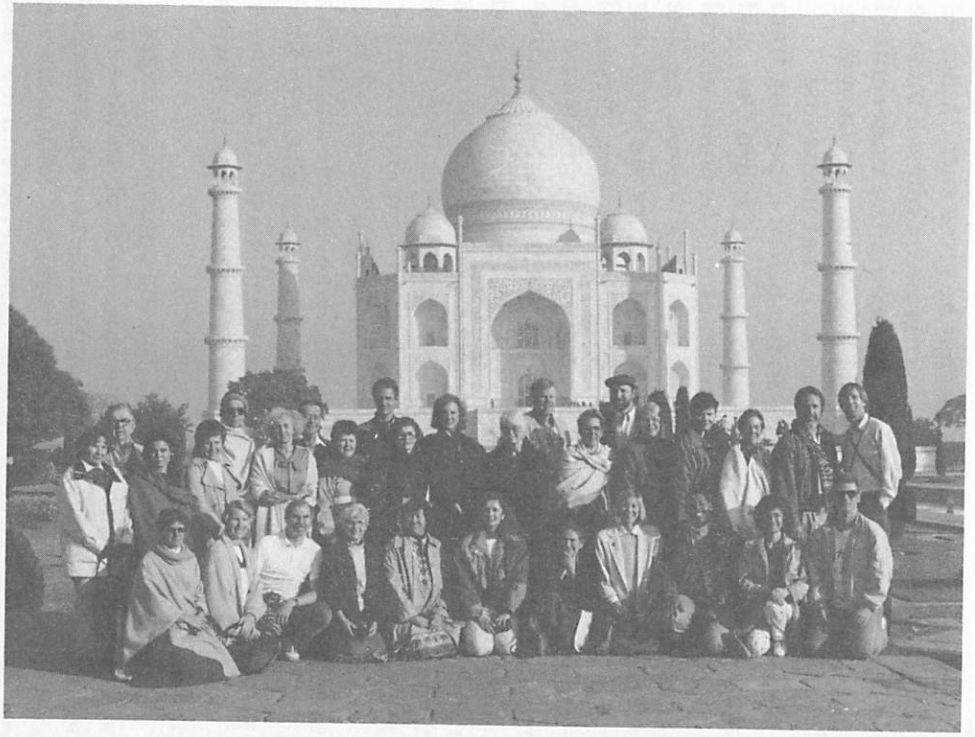
In the interview room the following morning, with several Indian men and Baba, the pace was fast. Baba chatted with us for a few minutes, then took each person to a corner area for a short, personal conversation. When he motioned for me to join him I went to him and we stood only a few inches apart. He began by telling me a few personal things about myself and about some people with whom I was related, assuring me that I was doing "good work" and that everything would continue to unfold harmoniously. Then he asked, "What can I give you?" I told him his blessing was sufficient.

Placing his hand on my chest he rubbed with a firm, circular motion. "You already have that," he assured me. "What can I give you as a keepsake?"

"Anything you want to, sir, but it's not necessary," I responded.

Before my words were completed he stepped back, moved his right hand in the familiar, quick stirring motion, and closed his hand to grasp whatever was there. "Here," he said, "a gold ring with my picture."

Of intricate design, the ring is set with twenty-two small, faceted rubies and inset with an enamel color picture of Baba. Some years later I inadvertently left it in a pants pocket when I put some clothes in a washing machine. Upon removing the clothes, the ring fell to the floor, minus the enamel picture. I had a jeweler put a piece of moonstone in its place. When I showed it to Baba,



CSA pilgrimage group, Taj Mahal, Agra, India: *January, 1992*

during another visit in 1990, he put his hand on my chest and said, "You don't need it anymore; my picture is in your heart."

Satya Sai Baba explains that he gives such things as a talisman, as a point of contact between himself and the person to whom it is given. By seeing the materialized object, the person remembers Baba and he can then more easily be in telepathic rapport with that individual.

During my first visit to India, before departing from Bombay to America, at the suggestion of Indra Devi and out of curiosity, I called a man reputed to be one of several custodians of astrological manuscripts known as *The Book of Brighu*. According to legend, before the beginning of the last Dark Age a group of astrologers prepared written horoscopes for thousands of people who would be born in future centuries. These were given to various family members with instructions to use them wisely and pass them on to their descendents. It was an intriguing story and I decided to test it. An appointment was made and I went to the designated place on a Sunday morning.

I was first taken outside the Brighu reader's house, where he measured my shadow by having me stand with my back to the sun while he calculated the distance from my feet to where my shadow-head extended on the ground. In his living room he took from a shelf a stack of what appeared to be ancient documents.

He told me that he would find the appropriate pages in the manuscript based on the sun's location in the sky at the time of my arrival for the appointment. I was asked not to reveal anything to him about myself but only to answer "yes" or "no" to any statements he made. After a few false starts he began to speak as though reading from the manuscript page before him. "You have one older brother, two older sisters, and one younger sister," he said.

Then followed a twenty minute commentary, mostly on general, superficial matters. Pausing, as though continuing to study the words before him, he pronounced, "You write very much. You began your study of yoga when you were young and attained proficiency when you were twenty-one." I was casually dressed and wore a simple shirt and trousers. There was nothing about my appearance or manner to indicate to an observer that I was a yogi. He also said, "You will return to India in nine years."

Nine years later, while speaking in Germany, a group of European students and friends asked me to join them on a visit to Satya Sai Baba's ashram in November of that year. We met there during a festive celebration of Baba's birthday, during which his educational institute was officially recognized by the Indian government and given university status. Prior to meeting my European friends at the ashram I visited New Delhi and from there went to Ranchi, to the site of Paramahansaji's first residential school for boys which he founded in 1917.

For several years I had been asked by American disciples and friends to consider a travel tour of India in which they could participate. I had always declined. Finally, in 1990, I agreed to their request and a group pilgrimage was scheduled with the understanding that we would be going as devotees to visit shrines and ashrams, with particular emphasis upon places associated with our guru line. On January 10, 1991, our party of thirty-two persons flew from New York to Frankfurt, Germany. There we met with friends for an evening of meditation and rested for a night before continuing to New Delhi.

Wanting everyone to experience Indian culture but knowing from prior experience the usefulness of obtaining adequate rest while traveling, I had arranged with the tour company for our group to be lodged in modern hotels,

with meals provided. We could then relax in comfort at the end of each day.

After a day in New Delhi we traveled by tour bus northward through towns and villages, to Rishikesh, a small Himalayan foothill town by the Ganges River noted for its ashrams and temples. There, we visited the ashram of The Divine Life Society, founded in 1936 by Swami Shivananda, a former medical doctor who chose to become a monastic yogi. Here many yoga teachers were trained by Swami Shivananda and sent all over the world to establish their own ashrams and teaching centers. Swamji made his transition in the early 1960s but his influence is still far-reaching. Several other temples were also visited and some brave members of our group took a brief dip in the cold Ganges waters.

From Rishikesh our buses carried us on the ten hour trek to the Nainital district, higher in the Himalayas where Lahiri Mahasaya had his first meeting with Mahavatar Babaji in 1861. At an elevation of 6,000 feet the January nights were extremely cold but the days were sunny and reasonably comfortable.

Agra, for a viewing of the Taj Mahal, was next on the itinerary. For the remainder of the tour we traveled on scheduled flights by Indian Air to the remaining cities. From Agra we flew to Banaras, now named Varanasi. Hindus call it *Kashi*, "the luminous, the city of light."

Of this city Mark Twain wrote: "Banaras is older than history, older than tradition, older even than legend, and looks twice as old as all of them put together!"

The eastern side of Banaras fronts on the Ganges River, which has its source in the Himalayas and winds across the plains of northern India to the Bay of Bengal. Along the river in Banaras are temples, shrines, and ashrams. *Ghats*, long flights of stone steps, are used by

throngs of residents and pilgrims to gain access to the waters which, to them, are considered sacred. Narrow lanes at the tops of the steps lead to a major city street and are lined with houses and shrines.

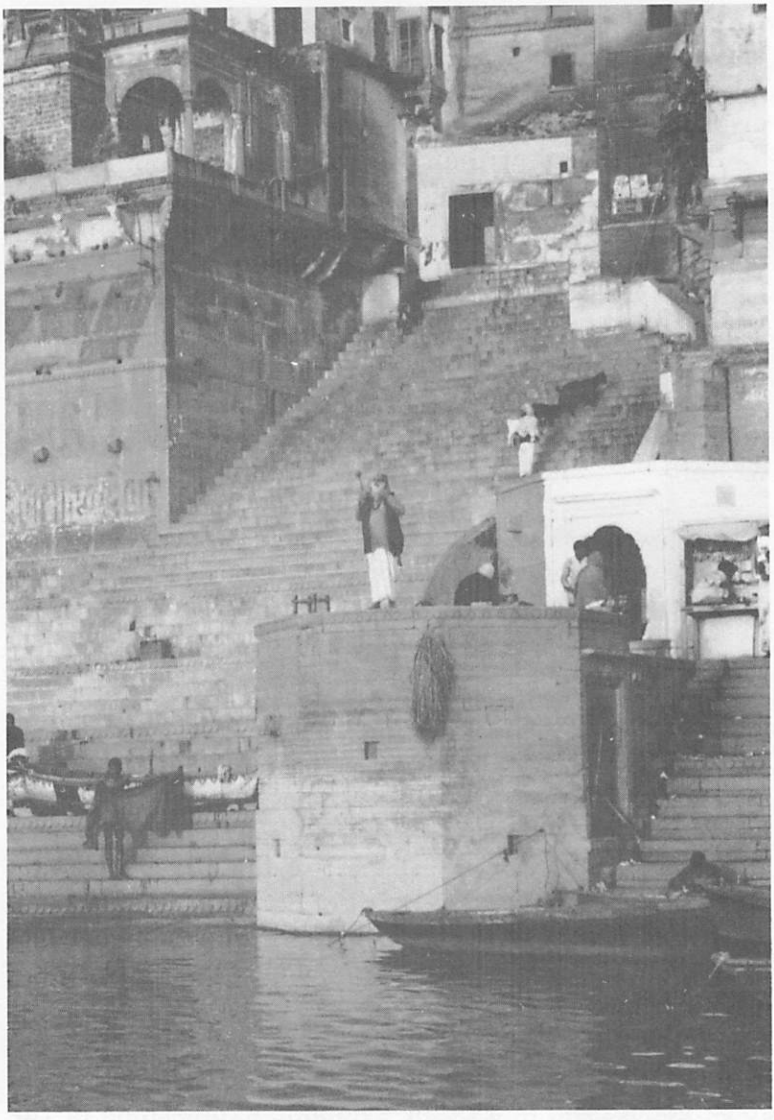
Tradition has it that one who dies in Banaras goes directly to the highest spiritual abode and is liberated from earthly bondage. It is said that the celebrated fifteenth century poet-saint, Kabir, departed from the city before leaving his body so that it would not appear to others that he was dependent upon it, rather than God's grace, for salvation.

Banaras is one of the oldest cities in the world. A mid-nineteenth century missionary, Reverend N.A. Sherring, wrote:

> Twenty-five centuries ago, at least, it was famous. When Babylon was struggling with Ninevah for supremacy, when Tyre was planting her colonies, when Athens was growing in strength, before Rome had become known, or Greece had contended with Persia, or Cyrus had added lustre to a Persian monarch, or Nebuchadnezzer had captured Jerusalem, and the inhabitants of Judea had been carried into captivity, she had already risen to greatness, if not glory.

The patron Deity, the aspect of the Godhead designated as representing the spirit of Banaras, is Shiva: the agency of divine power responsible for dissolution and renewal of the worlds. The city has long been a center of learning, noted for its scholars and spiritual leaders.

Westerners who visit India are sometimes perplexed when first confronted by what appears to be a plethora of gods, goddesses, and other symbolic expressions of the Divine which are reverenced by religious people. Any confusion can be easily dispelled by making an adjust-



Bathing ghat at Banaras

ment in attitude and by being willing to see these symbols as the local people see them.

God, only, is considered to be the single, manifesting reality which makes possible all that appears as and in the universe. The seeming different gods and goddesses merely represent various aspects of God's manifesting power and actions. *Brahma* is the expanding, outflowing aspect of *Brahman*: Supreme Consciousness devoid of modifications or characteristics. *Vishnu* is the aspect of God in manifestation which preserves and maintains creation. *Shiva* is the aspect which dissolves and renews forms in the field of Nature. The various goddesses are representative aspects of cosmic energies which are complementary and supportive of the regulating cosmic powers.

The religious-philosophical-cultural system today referred to as Hinduism is a blend of revelations of seers and the practices of the indigenous people. Informed people of India refer to it as *sanatana dharma*, "the eternal way of righteousness."

The Sindhu River, flowing into the Arabian Sea and forming part of the western boundary of the country, was referred to by ancient Persians as the "Hindu" River. The Greeks named it the "Indus" and referred to the country east of it as India. The country's inhabitants became known as Hindus and their religious and social practices as Hinduism.

Early European visitors and missionaries, observing members of the brahmin caste as being the dominant influence upon religious and social practices, referred to the way of life observed by the people as Brahmanism. The assumptions of outsiders about what the people of India believe and how they live are radically different from the facts.

One of the most popular gods is Ganesha. With his

elephant head and large body, Ganesha's image is often seen in major temples and at small shrines in houses and by the sides of roads. He is "the remover of all obstacles" and when a devout worshipper prays at a Ganesha shrine, as strange as it may seem to a tourist, the petitioner knows that he or she is asking the One God to eliminate obstacles to the accomplishment of desired purposes. Statues of Ganesha have multiple arms; the hands holding symbolic items that represent saving grace and the promise of freedom from the world's lures. His large abdomen reminds the devotee that God contains the universe within Himself, therefore, "What is there to fear?"

It was in Banaras that Paramahansa Yogananda met his guru in 1910. Sri Yukteswar at that time had a small ashram in the Rana Mahal section of the city and, years earlier, used to visit his guru, Lahiri Mahasaya, at his home on one of narrow lanes leading to Chousatti Ghat by the Ganges River.

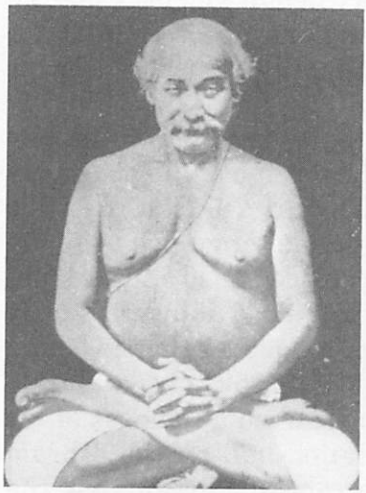
While making preparations for our pilgrimage to India, I corresponded with one of Lahiri Mahasaya's great-grandsons, who assured us a warm welcome when we arrived in Banaras.

Our tour guide took us first to the house where Lahiri Mahasaya used to live; where a descendent family now resides. We were allowed to see the downstairs room where the great master meditated and met with disciples. It is a simple room with a low, narrow bed in a corner and a few photographs on the walls. A clothbound copy of the *Bhagavad Gita* used by Lahiri Mahasaya and a few other personal items were on the bed. We were asked to observe silence and not allowed to take snapshots.

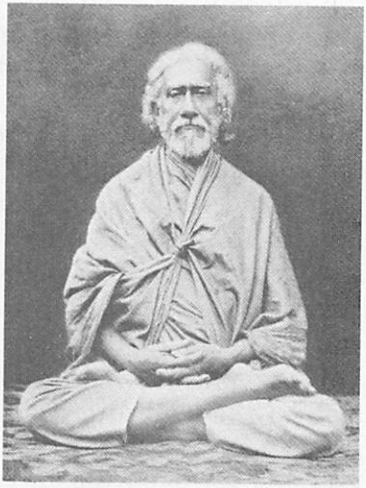
I remembered some stories of events that had unfolded in this room, as shared by Paramahansaji and gleaned from other sources, including incidents that occurred

Mahavatar Babaji

The line of Kriya Yoga gurus prior to Paramahansa Yogananda and his successors



Lahiri Mahasaya



Sri Yukteswar

when Babaji would occasionally visit here to talk with Lahiri Mahasaya and perhaps others who might be present. A definite, austere but benevolent spiritual force could be felt, which seemed to manifest itself as pure power and knowledge.

Several yards from the house we stood near the steps by the river, observing people engaged in their personal and ritual routines. At the appointed time we were taken to the entrance lane leading to the Lahiri Mahasaya temple, where we were met and welcomed into the temple compound.

An open area, spacious enough to accommodate perhaps one hundred devotees, is enclosed by walls of adjacent buildings. A modest temple is the focal point at the front of the compound and enshrines a massive, stone *shivalinga*, a symbolic representation of Supreme Consciousness in its unformed aspect, before which are marble statues of Lahiri Mahasaya and one of his sons and a grandson who succeeded him as family gurus in the Kriya Yoga lineage.

From Banaras we flew south, to visit Puri on the Bay of Bengal and to see Karar Ashram, one of the places my guru lived while being trained by Sri Yukteswar for his mission to the West. A helpful caretaker guided us to the small shrine which Paramahansaji designed and had constructed over the burial site where Sri Yukteswar's body was placed in 1936. The shrine, completed shortly before Paramahansaji's mahasamadhi in 1952, has a marble slab on the wall into which was carved a likeness of his guru. After visiting the meditation hall on the ashram grounds we departed to go to central Puri to view the famed Jagganath Temple.

Dedicated to Jagganath, "the Lord of the world," the compound is a massive structure and a pilgrimage desti-

nation for millions of devout Hindus. We were told that the temple kitchen often prepared more than thirty thousand meals a day for pilgrims and poor people. It is believed, by some Indian scholars, that Jesus lived in this temple when he visited here while on his journey through India and Tibet during his young adult years before beginning his brief public ministry. Not being Hindus, we could not enter the compound but viewed it from the rooftop of a public library across the street.

From Puri we flew to Bangalore, where we were met by tour buses for the drive to Prashanti Nilayam. Since my visit two years before, the road had been paved so that travel was much quicker than I remembered it.

We arrived at the ashram after dark and were assigned sleeping accommodations in large sheds provided to shelter the large numbers of people who visit. Bedding was obtained from shops across the road from the ashram and food acquired by those who wanted something to eat.

I had expected only a small number of people to be in residence at Baba's ashram, because it was after the Christmas holidays when many Americans and Europeans visit and before some of the traditional Indian holy days. But at least two thousand men and women were gathered the next morning to attend the darshan session.

Satya Sai Baba came out and moved among the people, as is his twice a day routine at his ashrams where he resides. After an hour or so, he withdrew to his private quarters and word spread that he was soon to depart for the Satya Sai Baba College for Boys at Whitefield near Bangalore, where I first met him in 1972.

After making arrangements with the ashram travel office for taxis, we toured the extensive grounds and the college campus immediately outside the gates. During the previous twenty years Prashanti Nilayam and more than

Hindu Temple in New Delhi, India

one hundred acres nearby had blossomed with guest accommodation buildings, college classrooms and dormitories for the more than one thousand students, a huge administration building, and other facilities; all brightly painted and well-maintained. Down the road was a new airport, and nearby a large hospital was in the beginning stages of construction. The hospital was completed a year later and over twenty-five thousand patients were treated during the first twelve months after it was opened. All medical services are free, as are the facilities and courses for college students.

Most of the members of our group elected to stay at the Holiday Inn in Bangalore, only a thirty-minute taxi ride to the Whitefield college campus. That, too, had been transformed since I had last seen it. Where only a few modest buildings had been, large ones now dominated the area. One activity hadn't changed, however. Monkeys still scampered between the buildings, often perching on rooftops or balconies to observe our behaviors.

Four days later, after a Sunday morning darshan session at the college campus, we boarded our flight to Bombay, for two days of rest before returning to America.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Everything is Given Us of God

Flowing through the milieu of twentieth century global society, unnoticed or ignored by many people, a current of beneficent, evolutional influence has been bringing about gradual, definite changes. It is this divine current, God's grace expressed through evolutionary forces, which is responsible for timely innovations and the emergence of creative ideas and human endeavors which implement constructive unfoldments for the welfare of the planetary family. The occasional confusion of thoughts and purposes which give rise to confrontation is but symptomatic of individual and social discontent, thereby providing a prod to rational people, affording them opportunities to seek out and discover underlying causes of unrest and to remove or renounce them.

Ideas and lifestyle preferences, once suspect because provocative, are now more openly appearing and are acceptable in the mainstream of societal thinking and behavior. Among the open-minded of every community, positive thinking, the practical usefulness of self-esteem, a more open and accepting attitude about individual and cultural differences, a more expansive understanding of the need to nurture one another and the planet we share, and a willingness to explore alternative ways of relating to

the universe are increasingly evident. Provincialism is giving way to more rational views, and a more common-sense quest for life's meaning and purpose is prevailing.

After several years of almost incessant travel, I felt it timely to consolidate expanding ministry activities and, in 1973, moved from Florida to Lakemont, Georgia. I continued to travel but was able to spend more time at the retreat facility to oversee office procedures, and be more available for personal interaction with individuals and groups during scheduled programs.

Three years after I moved here, Lois O'Neal made her transition, and a year later Edwin retired and I became the president of the board of directors. Because ministry activities required my full attention we closed the commercial printing business, focusing our energies and resources only on books and publications directly related to our teaching emphasis and having them printed by other firms. The off-property retreat house was sold and planned development of our headquarters property was started. Members donated several thousand dollars for the construction of the main Meditation Hall, which was dedicated in 1977 in memory of Lois. A few years later, a dome-style library, a children's schoolhouse, and a smaller meditation temple were built.

The Shrine of All Faiths meditation temple concept emerged clearly in my mind during one of my lecture tours of European cities. Flying from Frankfurt to Atlanta, I drew a sketch of the building as I saw it in my mind's eye. An octagonal structure, seven walls are centered by beautiful stained glass windows, each representing a major religious faith: Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Taoism, Islam, and Hinduism.

My only creative contribution to the stained glass window project was to request the artisan who designed

Shrine of All Faiths Meditation Temple

CSA offices and publishing department

Retreat class in CSA Meditation Hall

Public meeting while on lecture tour

and made them to include the symbol of each represented faith inset in a circle in the window. The temple is for the private use of visitors and is occasionally used for weddings and other significant, sacramental functions.

Most of the funding which makes possible the maintenance and growth of ministry services is provided by a supporting membership comprised of dedicated aspirants and Kriya Yoga initiates in North America and other countries. Their regular contributions flow as an activity of grace because of their commitment to our mutual aims and purposes. Supplemental funding is provided by donations at retreats here and at my lectures and programs offered in other cities.

Book and literature sales provide marginal income because we purposely keep sales prices low and thousands of copies of books and booklets are given free to persons who cannot afford to pay, prison inmates who request them, and to our group leaders in West Africa who distribute the materials. I do not receive any royalties for books I write which are published by our literature department.

Every year, from late spring until early autumn, we schedule weekend and week long meditation retreats during which the philosophy and practice of yoga is taught and Kriya Yoga initiation is offered to prepared persons. One week during the summer is scheduled as Family Week, when parents are encouraged to bring children for their own program, which is held concurrently with the one for adults. Our trained, volunteer teachers work with the children and provide a variety of activities: arts and crafts, nature walks, hatha yoga, singing and devotional chanting, meditation practice, educational video programs, and the opportunity to create and produce a dramatic play which is presented for the adults during an evening fellowship gathering.

Several hundred participants attend these annual retreats, usually in groups of forty to seventy to allow the maintenance of an informal atmosphere in which inner renewal can be experienced. Holistic lifestyle guidelines are taught and vegetarian meals are provided.

A training program for persons who feel led to represent our teaching emphasis is offered each year. Requirements for participation include a basic understanding of what we teach, good moral character, willingness to learn and to adhere to guidelines, and total commitment to the ideal of serving others in accord with directions provided.

Teachers are reminded that it is our understanding that it is possible for all people, by right personal endeavor and God's grace, to experience a conscious relationship with God and live a fulfilled life in harmony with the laws of Nature. Further, it is our mission to share this understanding with all interested persons.

Providing a supportive, helpful message to as many truth seekers as possible, our emphasis is upon working with spiritually awake devotees of God, to assist them to further spiritual growth leading to superconscious states, cosmic conscious states, God conscious states and liberation of consciousness. We are not endeavoring to meet emotional needs, only, or to attract a large membership of persons primarily interested in social interaction or group dependency—we *are* here to encourage souls to awaken and fulfill their destiny.

While honoring all enlightenment traditions and meaningful religious practices, our approach to spiritual growth transcends sectarian forms and boundaries. We direct our attention, not to creeds, but to the essence which enlivens all formal and informal approaches to higher understanding. Paramahansaji taught: "The appeal of yoga is its approach to God through a daily, usable scien-

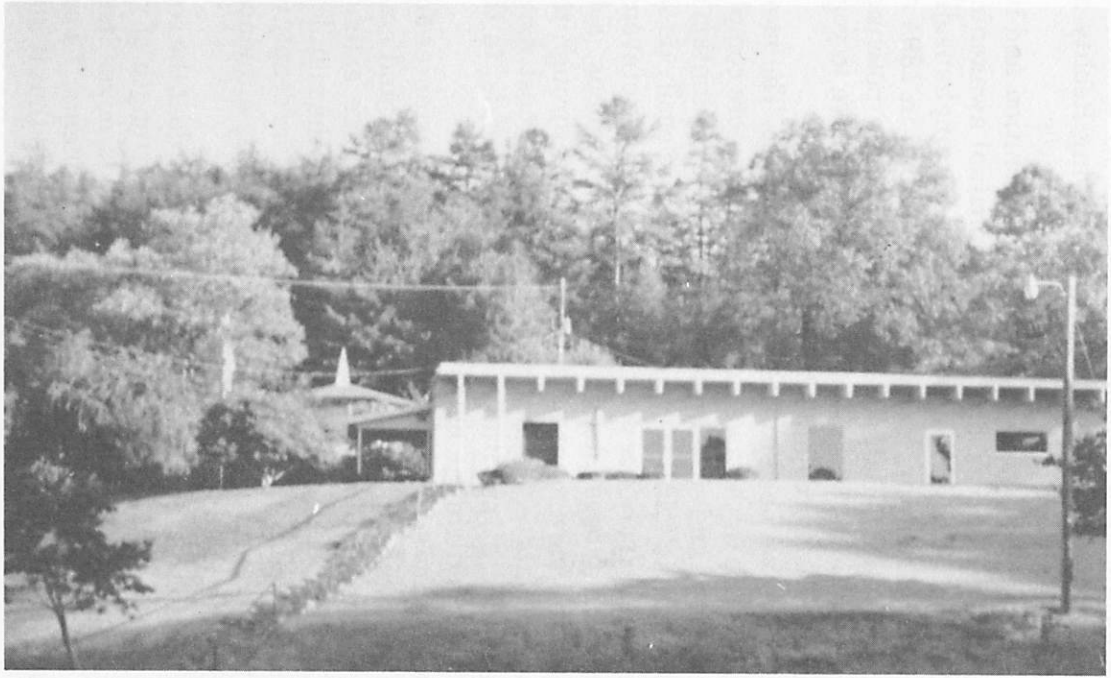
tific method." This is our emphasis.

Dr. Carl Jung, the eminent Swiss psychologist, wrote:

> When a religious method recommends itself as 'scientific,' it can be certain of its public...yoga fulfills this expectation. Quite apart from its charm of the new and the fascination of the half-understood, there is good cause for yoga to have many adherents. It offers the possibility of controllable experience and thus satisfies the scientific need for 'facts'; and besides this, by reason of its breadth and depth, its venerable age, its doctrine and method, which includes every phase of life, it promises undreamed of possibilities.

International ministry activities unfolded in divine order during the decade of the 1980s. When the time was right, God gave the increase. Some of our literature was distributed in other countries, needs were met, and willing, responsible individuals came forward to assume positions of leadership. Invitations to speak in several European cities, West Africa, and Brazil resulted in large public meetings and classes in those regions of the world and in the translation of books in multiple languages. Outreach through the printed word on a global scale continues to be a priority ministry project because at least ninety-five percent of the world's people live beyond the borders of the United States and many truth seekers in other countries have only recently become aware of higher possibilities.

Cooperation with constructive activities of other individuals and organized groups has always been nurtured. Because of this, I have lectured and taught at many New Thought churches—Unity, Religious Science, Divine Science, and various independent groups—and at holistic conferences and yoga ashrams. A God-centered message



Center for Spiritual Awareness Meditation Hall, Lakemont, Georgia

is appropriate at any gathering of spiritually motivated persons. I always emphasize the underlying Reality at life's core and disregard superficial differences.

In accord with the present trend of evolution and its quickening influences, spontaneous spiritual awakening is occurring on a global scale. When Paramahansaji's guru, Sri Yukteswar, met Mahavatar Babaji in 1894 at Allahabad, India, Babaji told him that many potential saints lived in the West and would be responsive to yoga teachings. His words have been proven true.

It is God we need to know and experience. The more settled we are in the awareness of God, the more compliantly attuned and surrendered we are to the inclination of the One Life to fulfill its purposes, the more easily do we witness and experience providential unfoldments of events and circumstances in our lives. The continuous, self-manifesting movement of the Spirit of God through the agency of Nature, seldom considered and almost never apprehended by spiritually unawake persons, is, to the discerning individual, obviously apparent.

Behind the screen of seeming random occurrences and often obscured by our multitudinous thoughts and emotional states, an insistent, evolutionary force extends itself to press out on the screen of space-time the manifold appearances that confront our senses. The more deeply we go into the realm of primal cause, the more its influences blend with our human condition.

"Only in the sacredness of inward silence does the soul surely meet the secret, hidden God. The strength of resolve, which afterwards shapes our life and mixes itself with action, is the fruit of those sacred moments."* I can truthfully affirm that all of the useful things that it may

*Frederick William Robertson (1816-1853); *Sermons*.

appear that I have accomplished, all events that have unfolded in my life which may be considered as meaningful, and any lasting help received by others as a result of my endeavors, have been gifts of grace.

Our day-to-day involvements and relationships in the relative sphere are somewhat determined by our volitional actions, whether subliminal or overt, and more often than we know by influences not readily apprehended. Thankfully, we are not totally dependent upon our own behaviors; there is a Higher Power ever present and expressive, the actions of which are benevolently supportive of us. When we are still somewhat under the spell of our own illusions, it seems to us that the Higher Power is apart from us, yet cares for us. When illusions fade and we know the truth, our former misconception of separateness is replaced by certain knowledge that we are aspects of the Presence and Power.

We often "know that we know" but complete knowledge of higher realities may not be ours. It may be that we are too much involved with externals, still somewhat attached to our illusions, or have yet to remove ourselves from the influences of ingrained habits and memories. Intellectual inquiry can allow us knowledge of relative matters and of the reality and characteristics of God. The next step is to go beyond the process of objective analysis of God to personal relationship as the result of direct perception and experience, which is actual realization.

Enlightened spiritual masters, inwardly knowledgeable and compassionately concerned about the general and spiritual welfare of all people, teach what is most useful and helpful according to needs and circumstances. To persons who, because of psychological disposition or personal circumstances, can benefit from general guidelines and lifestyle routines, suitable practices are recom-

mended. To those who are capable of comprehending higher knowledge, the inner way is taught and encouraged. Regardless of what concept of God a devotee may have during preliminary stages of cultivating awakened spiritual consciousness, all sincere prayers go to the source of God and all heartfelt aspiration draws forth a response from it.

To worship God from a distance with sentimental feelings and contrived actions is to remain apart from that oneness or wholeness we truly desire, just as sentimental feelings and courtship actions directed to an object of relationship continue so long as union with it is desired but not consummated. Where there is oneness, there is no "other"; there is only singularity.

We sometimes say of two or more people who demonstrate perfect compatibility, "They seem like one person." So it is when love removes false ideas of separateness from God; we no longer think in terms of ourselves *and* God, we know only God.

Love can be recognized as an obviously agreeable, constructive, attracting force or influence which, when apprehended and accepted, removes us from all contrary influences. Saints, philosophers, authors of scripture, as well as others who may otherwise be unknown for exceptional qualities or characteristics but who have experienced love to some degree, declare it to be altogether transforming and fulfilling.

Understanding that love is an attractive force or influence which exists and can be apprehended and experienced, we are able to discover that love is not created but can only be expressed from a central, divine source. The "love of God" is that pervading, attracting influence that governs the movements of Nature and draws souls back to the Source. Love also has origins in us because God is us,

as the Self of us.

What is sometimes considered to be love by many who are yet in a self-conscious condition, that is, a personality-centered state of consciousness, is attachment to that which seems to promise a degree of security or satisfaction, or provides some indication of being able to meet our limited sense of need. But real love, when experienced even in mild degree, causes us to transcend all narrow, personality-self desires and inclinations. It elevates us to levels at which we can know true freedom without any taint or suggestion of limiting bondage.

If we are to be attached to anything in the early stages of our spiritual growth, it is best to be attached to truth, to God, to absolute values which when demonstrated result in a personal realization of freedom that cannot possibly be endowed by any lesser thing or condition.

Accepting the actions of true love, which are entirely liberating, we cannot then agree within ourselves to allow misguided sympathy, unregulated emotionalism, or considerations of differences to cloud our awareness or mar our experience of love. To that which we truly love we find easy to surrender, natural to comply with, because entirely agreeable to our soul need—which is to awaken from bondage to erroneous perceptions in order to know and actualize soul freedom.

There is no possibility of soul freedom so long as we are self-confined to shifting moods, disordered thoughts, and behaviors which are randomly purposeless or impelled by confused psychological drives and tendencies. There is no possibility of soul freedom so long as we are removed from love's influences and actions.

Understanding that love is an attracting force that invites whatever is in proximity to itself to partake of its nature and character, we can better comprehend the often

quoted statement: God is love. This does not mean that the essence of God is an insipid, sentimental, emotional surge either from the core of God's reality or from within our own soul depths. Love is the force of attraction that unifies. This is why we are counseled to love God and to love others with the same pure love that we experience within ourselves. Where love of God is allowed to express, there is oneness.

Grace is God's love in action. It is the expressive result of love's attracting quality. When all is said and done, when our good works and constructive endeavors have enabled us to fulfill mundane purposes and brought us to the very edge of ultimate, divine discovery, it is our surrendered love and God's redeeming grace that illumines our consciousness and liberates the spirit.

APPENDIX

The Philosophy and Practice of Yoga

Cosmic Time-Cycles and the New Era

THE PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICE OF YOGA

Four fundamental, interdependent concepts support the core thesis of yoga philosophy and the reasons for learning and practicing its processes. These are to be acknowledged by the seeker of truth desirous of demonstrating superior results.

1. *The Reality of a Transcendental Field of Absolute, Existence-Being or Pure Consciousness.* Outside the field of space-time, it makes possible the manifestation of universes, enlivening them with vitality, endowing them with consciousness, and providing impulses which determine evolutionary changes and transformations. Full awareness, absolute realization, of Pure Consciousness is the focused aim of devoted spiritual aspirants because It is the Reality which, when known, allows all things to be known. Such unqualified knowing is the realized enlightenment that liberates the soul from all illusions and their consequences. The Field of Absolute Existence-Being, the sole Cause and Substratum of objective, cosmic manifestation is referred to as the Supreme Self.

2. *The universal processes* that produce and maintain the cosmos and provide the dimensional fields in which life expresses. Unconsciously identified with these processes and fields, souls relate to them as determined by their needs or desires.

3. *The universal laws of causation* which relate souls

to the cosmos and contribute to their tenacious involvement with it. These comprise the laws of karma—of causes and their corresponding effects in the relative spheres.

4. *The practical means* of facilitating spiritual growth, to remove soul awareness from delusions and illusions, is yoga. Right practice of recommended yoga processes makes possible spontaneous Self-illumination or liberation of consciousness. Because the True Self of every person is the Supreme Self, the splendor of the soul shines freely when restrictions and coverings which obscure its effulgence are dissolved by spiritual practices or transcended because of superior realizations which unfold by God's grace.

The word *yoga* is derived from Sanskrit *yug*, "to yoke," "to hold fast"; as in Latin *jungere, jugum,* and French *joug*. The term is used to designate any intentional procedure, including prayer and meditation but not confined to them, used for the purpose of cultivating spiritual growth.

The essence of yoga practice and descriptions of its culmination is clearly explained in the classic *Yoga Sutras,* the authorship of which is attributed to the philosopher-seer Patanajali who is believed to have written the text at least two thousand years ago.* Even then, it was acknowledged as a systemized account of information and practices known and taught several thousands of years earlier. Central to Patanjali's exposition, is that souls which are not yet aware of their essential, spiritual nature are eventually inclined to want to have awareness restored to the original, pure condition. Yoga provides a known,

*Yoga Sutras 1:2-4: "Yoga is the regulation and dissolution of modifications and fluctuations of the mental field. Upon their dissolution, the Self rests in its own true nature. When not resting in its own true nature, the Self is inclined to identify with mental states and their transformations."

experimental way for right Self-identification or realization to be actualized.

The Role of the Guru and the Path of Discipleship

Almost all of the ancient yoga texts emphasize the practical usefulness of having a guru: as a guide to right living, to provide instruction, and to initiate the seeker into subjective levels of knowledge and experience. While some satisfying benefits can be experienced as a result of personal study and endeavor, total commitment to necessary psychological transformation and spiritual growth is deemed essential if rapid progress is to be demonstrated. For this, it is helpful to have the wise counsel and enlightened influence of someone who is knowledgeable and proficient in yoga processes.

As *gu*, "heaviness, darkness," is banished by *ru*, "lightness, luminosity," so the *guru* is the truth teacher who helps the disciple awaken from unconsciousness to self-conscious states and to higher states of superconsciousness, cosmic consciousness, God consciousness, and Pure Consciousness.

The guru should be a person who has mastered the practices he or she teaches and has attained an advanced degree of Self-realization. At the time of initiation the disciple chooses to commit to a life of surrendered devotion to God and to spiritual practice; renouncing all outer attachments and focusing attention and actions on awakening to higher knowledge and expanded states of consciousness. Initiation is a dying to mundane interests and pursuits, to allow rebirth to occur in a spiritual sense. For this, a cloistered lifestyle is not mandatory. What is necessary is inner renunciation of secular values even while

fulfilling acquired and chosen duties and obligations with a cheerful demeanor and skillful excellence.

Word origins of English *disciple* and *discipline* are Latin *discipulus*, from *discere*, "to learn." A disciple, then, is a truth seeker who is willing to learn and to engage in constructive, intentional lifestyle regimens for the purpose of demonstrating what is learned. Educated people consider it unwise, if not absurd, for a seeker of knowledge to deny the practical usefulness of learning from others who are already accomplished practitioners of knowledge. So it is in the yoga tradition: novice students are encouraged to learn from others who are already enlightened and skillful in order to shorten the learning phase so that more time can be given to using knowledge to accomplish enlightened purposes.

Because progress in yoga practice is more likely to be rapid if the practitioner is informed about the basic philosophical concepts upon which endeavors are based, the sincere aspirant should study to acquire valid information, contemplate the meaning of what is learned until understanding unfolds, and put into practice what is appropriate to the needs at hand. Many who desire the benefits of spiritual practice may fail to experience them—as they may fail to succeed in secular endeavors—because they are insufficiently informed or do not adhere to procedures known to be effective.

In accord with the traditional approach when teaching yoga philosophy and practices I will now proceed to impart an overview of the processes by which Consciousness comes into objective expression and its varied operations.

The Categories of Cosmic Manifestation

A practitioner of yoga may choose to adhere to traditional religious practices as a matter of personal preference. Even so, if superior benefits are desired, one should be willing to transcend beliefs in order to obtain true, higher knowledge.

Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* present an approach to Self-realization which is compatible with the philosophical system known as *Samkhya,* the "enumerating" (numbering) of the categories of stages of cosmic manifestation, from the Field of Unmodified Supreme Consciousness to the full manifestation of the cosmos. This approach explains the Field of Pure Consciousness as the underlying basis and essence of everything in the realm of Nature. In the unmodified state, Pure Consciousness is Self-Existent Being. From It, because of an impulse to express, a manifesting aspect expands, permeated with vital force and intelligence. This initial, expressive aspect of Absolute Being is the field or realm of the Godhead. From the field of God vital forces flow into manifestation as the field of Primal Nature, their processes directed by the innate intelligence of God. This flowing of vital forces is the Word, Aum or Om.

Three primary attributes of consciousness pervade the fields of the Godhead and Nature, making possible all cosmic manifestations and their transformations. The Sanskrit word, *guna,* defines the functions of these primary attributes. They "bind, contain, and regulate" cosmic forces.

Sattwa guna imparts luminosity, brightness, purity, and clarity. *Tamas guna* imparts the characteristics of inertia, darkening, heaviness, and density. *Rajas guna*

influences movement, acting upon the other two attributes inherent in consciousness and contributing to their changes and transformations. The influences of these triple attributes can be observed throughout the universe, in the expressed processes of objective Nature as well as in the mental, physical, behavorial, and circumstantial characteristics of living things and creatures. Many of our states of consciousness, mental states, behaviors, and personal circumstances are the result of the influences of these attributes. To accomplish our chosen purposes and be successful in actualizing awakened spiritual consciousness we need to rid ourselves of obvious physical and mental restricting conditions as well as remove our awareness from the influences of cosmic forces as determined by the actions of all three primary attributes pervading the field of Nature.

All categories of cosmic manifestation external to the field of the Godhead are illusory: they are actual expressions of the One Consciousness but are not permanent because subject to changes and dependent upon That which is their cause and support. Our universe, with its billions of galaxies, is said to be but one of countless universes existing in parallel space-time continuums, all of which are grounded in the one, unbounded field of Pure Consciousness.

Souls are individualized units of reflected light of Supreme Consciousness. The light of Spirit, shining in the field of Primal Nature, becomes identified with material substance and assumes various viewpoints according to degrees of involvement. In this way does the Supreme Self assume the appearances of separate Selfhood. Because reflected light does not really become that with which it is identified, souls are not material beings but are ever spiritual beings. Therefore, the awakening and enlighten-

ment of souls is due to having awareness removed from attachments to objective Nature so that the original condition of pure awareness is realized. This awakening is facilitated by our own conscious aspirations and personal endeavors, and consummated by grace.

The Oversoul, God, unlike souls which become identified with Nature, is not under the influence of delusion. God is ever free and while expressing cosmic actions is not acted upon by them. This is the condition to which devoted practitioners of yoga aspire: not to become God, which is not possible, but to be God-like. Beyond this degree of enlightenment there is a higher state: that of transcending the God-realized state to realize unqualified Pure Consciousness.

The categories of cosmic manifestation are described as being twenty-four which express outwardly. The twenty-fifth category is the field of Pure Consciousness from which all processes begin. It, being unmodified and without attributes, cannot be described except in terms of what It is not.

The processes of cosmic manifestation result in the production of various spheres or realms, which interpenetrate and serve as fields in which events occur and life expresses. Souls inhabit these regions, relating to them as their states of consciousness, needs, desires, and abilities to function determine. In sequential order they are: the realm of the Godhead; the realm in which the impulse to manifest the cosmos originates; the realm of spiritual reflection, where the light of God prevails; the sphere of Primal Nature; the realm of causal, magnetic fields; the electric or astral realm; and the physical realm of gross matter.

The realm of spiritual reflection is sometimes referred to as the celestial sphere, where nearly enlightened souls

dwell either prior to their involvement with Nature or after having transcended it. Causal, astral, and material realms are where Nature-identified souls express until they awaken from illusions.

As souls move from the field of God into involvement with spheres of manifest Nature they attract to themselves sheaths or coverings through which to function at various levels. The first sheath is one through which subtle perceptions are possible and is named the "bliss sheath" because through it almost complete awareness of Pure Consciousness is experienced. With further involvement with Nature, the sheath through which determination of differences is facilitated, is formed. This is the organ of intelligence. When purified, the light of soul shines in it without restriction and the individualized soul is illumined. When intellect is clouded, disturbing endeavors to determine truth from illusion, degrees of delusion are experienced.

When the soul's awareness of individuality blends with subtle feeling and intelligence and further involvement with Nature occurs, a mental sheath is formed which includes the mind-actions of thinking. With further involvement with Nature, causal magnetic, astral electric, and physical sheaths are assumed. Seers teach that the soul is not any of these sheaths or coverings, but is ever a spiritual being. Any belief to the contrary is the result of objective identification and the resulting misperceptions or illusions.

Confused because of involvements with objective realms, the soul behaves unwisely; that is, with but scant ability to exercise intelligence. Experiencing errors in perception and making mistakes in judgment, struggling with circumstances and accumulating desires and traumas as a result of blind or compulsive behaviors and

painful experiences, the soul's actions cause the mental field to become confused. This further clouds consciousness and reinforces the false conviction of separate Selfhood. Physical, mental, and emotional conditionings comprise the karmic condition, restricting awareness and function and contributing to actions and effects of actions which are not always consciously desired or pleasant to experience. The initial approach in yoga practice is to weaken and remove restricting conditions. Kriya Yoga (the way of right actions) is recommended, to eliminate all physical and mental obstacles and make possible more immediate realization of God.

The first step in the process of removing physical and mental restrictions is to adopt a lifestyle that will prevent a further accumulation of them; that is, to live with understanding, avoiding attitudes and behaviors which are self-limiting or self-defeating. Disciplined behavior, study for the purpose of acquiring higher knowledge, and surrender to God is the essence of the yoga of right actions.

The devotee is then counseled to remain resolved on a chosen course of constructive action; to be patient in the face of challenge; and by calm self-analysis, aided by the cleansing influences of superconscious forces which invade the mind and body because of divine aspiration and meditation, be successful in freeing soul awareness from any remaining restricting conditions. An enlightened person living from higher realization while engaged in final mental purification processes or still somewhat influenced by the effects of past actions is said to be "spiritually free while embodied." With the elimination of all restricting conditions the soul realizes the "supremely free" state and lives spontaneously in the light of higher knowledge by God's grace.

The Five Primary Systems of Yoga and Their Applications

Any realistic approach to Self-actualization and illumination of consciousness can be referred to as yoga; hence the references to "kundalini yoga," "sound current yoga," "siddha yoga," and more. These emphatic approaches are, in fact, included in the five traditional, primary systems. Kriya Yoga is but a focused approach which utilizes the most result-producing procedures of the traditional systems.

Yoga predates the dawn of humanity's known history by many thousands of years. Available evidence indicates its practice among indigenous people of India prior to Vedic and Christian eras, with signs of its influences having been extended to others regions of the world. Sages say that yoga was first taught to spiritually qualified truth seekers by the gods themselves, thus placing its origin in the source of all knowledge, the field of Pure Consciousness.

For centuries, yoga philosophy and practices were directly transmitted from teacher to student, from guru to disciple. From time to time, written records were made by writing with a blunt instrument on whatever materials were available before the invention of paper and later the printing press. A few basic texts are *Hatha Yoga Pradipika, The Gheranda Samhita,* and *Shiva Samhita. Samhita* means "collection" or "placing together of relevant items or objects." Each of these texts is concisely rendered and refers to a long tradition through which the information was transmitted.

Hatha Yoga: Preparatory Practices and Self-Mastery

The implied meaning of *hatha* is "to go against" the current of unwanted tendencies and conditions in order to allow the unfoldment of those which are more desirable. Another meaning is derived from *ha*, "sun," and *tha*, "moon," referring to some of the more advanced procedures practiced for the purpose of balancing the electrically positive and negative, or solar and lunar, influences in body and mind so that disturbing conditions are neutralized and overcome. While the aim of practice is the attainment of superconscious states and God-realization, various preliminary procedures are taught to prepare the practitioner's body and mind for meditation and the awakening of dormant, vital forces. Most of the essential procedures found in other, traditional systems of yoga are described along with specific ones which are usually associated with hatha yoga practice: physical cleansings, dietary regimens, asanas (postures), pranayamas (life force regulation procedures), and mudras (procedures practiced to acquire conscious control over bodily functions and to encourage awakening of kundalini).

Physical cleansings include bathing, and procedures used to cleanse nasal passages and head sinus cavities, and the gastrointestinal tract, if necessary.

Dietary recommendations emphasize the usefulness of pure, natural foods suited to the constitutional needs of the individual and which provide adequate nourishment with a minimum of energy expended for assimilation and scant waste residues to be eliminated.

The asanas or postures are designed to contribute to muscle strength and tone, flexibility, deep relaxation and stress reduction, and to awaken and balance the flows of

the body's vital forces. They are to be practiced in a quiet environment, calmly, in a relaxed, meditative mood. As more than mere physical exercises, they serve a higher purpose which is to be remembered during practice.

Pranayamas or life force regulation regimens are usually practiced by using certain breathing rhythms learned from the teacher. Alternate nostril breathing is a basic pranayama used to balance the flows of life force, calm the mind, and improve powers of concentration. Other pranayamas may be used to generate body heat, cool the systems, cleanse subtle pathways through which the life currents flow, and to encourage movements of vital forces preliminary to spontaneous kundalini awakening and activity. As with asana practice, pranayamas are practiced with calm attention. Violent efforts are to be avoided.

Mudras usually involve a combination of pranayama and physical control. These, and other procedures are best learned from a qualified teacher or guru. Advanced mudra practice enables the practitioner to acquire a high degree of conscious control over internal forces. This is to encourage ascending flows of current to move through *sushumna*, the central channel of the spinal pathway leading to the brain.

Settled in devotion to God and engaged in right living practices, and having prepared oneself by becoming proficient in preliminary procedures, the devotee proceeds to prayerful meditation and intentional contemplation for the purpose of exploring inner levels of consciousness and experiencing the reality of God and transcendental states.

Many texts on the subject of yoga are replete with promises regarding the results of attentive practice: supernatural powers (*siddhis*) can be acquired; physical immortality may be demonstrated; one may acquire dominion

over the elements and cosmic forces; death itself may be overcome. All of these and more, except the "overcoming of death" by removing awareness from the influences of change, are temporary accomplishments—the by-products of practice and not the real aim of yoga.

Karma Yoga: The Way of Surrendered Action

Righteous, constructive actions, understood as being the means of accomplishment of purposes which are performed without attachment to them or their results, are nonbinding. Actions which are inappropriate to the circumstances at hand, which are performed compulsively or motivated by egocentric drives, and which are destructive in results, cause problems for ourselves and others involved and further complicate our lives. No person or creature can avoid actions because our existence in relationship with Nature requires participation for survival of the body and the accomplishment of necessary and chosen purposes. Yogis are not exempt from providing for themselves shelter, clothing, food, any other required resource, and for maintaining supportive relationships. The recommended approach to living is to implement right actions for specific purposes without allowing self-centeredness or attachments of any kind to interfere with efficient performance of duties or to disturb mental peace and soul awareness.

The way of karma yoga is the way of surrendered, selfless action. Karma refers to causes and their effects. The ideal is to learn how to cause desired effects and to respond to life's goodness without becoming emotionally caught up in the processes or allowing the major aim of Self-realization to be neglected or thwarted. The essential

approach is to discover our major purposes and fulfill them efficiently while avoiding attitudes, thoughts, emotional states, relationships, and behaviors which are contrary to our spiritual resolve. Major purposes are those which directly relate to our responsibilities in this world and the fulfillment of soul destiny.

With practice, the devotee becomes increasingly aware of the experienced fact that a Higher Power is more and more influential in ordering personal affairs. Living like this contributes to peace of mind, social harmony, nurturing of the environment, psychological and physical wellness, and more rapid spiritual growth.

One of the more subtle, tempting distractions on the spiritual path is that of being too preoccupied with whether or not spiritual progress is being accomplished. This behavior can be avoided by choosing a lifestyle which is fully supportive of major aims and purposes and spiritual growth, and engaging in spiritual practices without any anxiety about immediate or eventual results. Having chosen the higher way, and living it, the results of our actions will become increasingly self-evident.

Bhakti Yoga: The Way of Love and Devotion

Love is an attracting force that pulls whatever is influenced by it to itself. When mystics speak of God as love they testify to their understanding and experience of God as the primary, attracting force expressive in Nature. It is this attracting force grounded in the field of God that unveils Nature and contributes to our spontaneous spiritual awakening and growth. As the outflowing, creative force flowing from the field of God produces the universe out of itself, so the attracting force of God redeems Nature

through the processes of evolution.

To the devotee of God the universe is evidence of God's existence. The universe, manifested by the interactions of cosmic forces, cannot exist apart from its cause, just as souls cannot exist apart from their cause. The cause of the universe and souls is the impulse of God to express. First with discernment, and then by realization, we can learn to see through objective appearances to their essence, Pure Consciousness. We can learn to acknowledge every person as being as divine as we are.

All of the soul virtues tend to be spontaneously unfolded when love is influential—when it acts upon us or when it is quickened from within the depths of our beings. We do not have to try to be good when we love. We do not have to try to avoid causing harm or injury when we love. We cannot be afraid when love prevails. We cannot fail to have a satisfying, knowing relationship with God when love is allowed to have its way.

When love impels, it is easy to pray and meditation flows smoothly. A devotee may pray to any aspect of God which seems real and satisfies the heart because surrendered prayer is worship of God in Spirit and in truth. It is also possible to love Supreme Consciousness, even though it is without form or name, and some saints declare this to be the highest form of worship.

The way of love and devotion to God is suitable for all devotees. It is especially recommended to persons for whom the more intensive yoga regimens are difficult or impossible, for those whose intellectual powers are not yet keenly functional, and for those who experience difficulty in maintaining concentration when meditating. This does not mean that practical measures should be ignored, intellectual endeavors avoided, or meditation not practiced in favor of a purely devotional approach to God-realization.

A mistake that some devotional truth seekers make is that of being too emotional in their devotion, to the point of being undisciplined in practical matters and neglecting self-training for the purpose of cultivating intellectual skills and functional abilities. They may then become kind-hearted, decent people to associate with, but be lacking in the capacity to live responsibly or to clearly comprehend the metaphysical basis of life. This will not occur if the devotee is truly intent upon mental illumination and liberation of consciousness because increased soul awareness will impel the heart to renounce behaviors which limit spiritual growth.

It should be understood that devotees whose approach includes more intentional involvement with specific practices are also liable to err in judgment if their purposes are not clearly defined and adhered to. One whose emphasis is hatha yoga may become proud because of proficient practice of techniques and routines. One whose focus is karma yoga may become obsessed with service instead of wisely serving with compassionate care. One intent upon acquiring knowledge of higher realities may become vain and look with disdain upon those whose chosen or destined path is different. A meditator may become involved with illusory perceptions or hallucinations, or may become attached to perceptions of peace or bliss instead of renouncing successive levels of unfoldment in favor of higher realizations.

Jnana Yoga: The Way of Knowledge

It is said, by seers, that right knowledge of God leads to experience of God and that direct experience of God results in having access to all knowledge. Knowledge of world processes can be acquired by intellectual inquiry,

observation, and personal experience. Some, but not total, knowledge of God can be acquired by intellectual means, and from partial knowledge of God awareness can shift to make possible direct, intuitive insight and realization.

Devotees of the way of knowledge are encouraged to contemplate the meaning of life and the categories of cosmic manifestation until intellectual comprehension blossoms into true understanding. In the process, every illusion is dispelled or transcended, every insubstantial thing and circumstance is known for what it is: a mere appearance in space and time. Finally, when the intelligence is purified, the light of the true Self shines in it and illumination of consciousness prevails.

We know our understanding is valid when our attitudes, behaviors, and relationships reflect it; when all doubts cease and cosmic conscious states become increasingly dominant.

Raja Yoga: The Way of Mental Quietude and Meditation

This is the eightfold path described in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*. The procedures consist of the five restraints imposed for the purpose of regulating mental impulses and sensory urges, and ensuring constructive behavior; the five intentional practices implemented for the purpose of facilitating psychological transformation and spiritual growth; sitting to meditate; regulation of life forces and mental processes; internalization of attention; concentration on the chosen object of meditation; contemplative meditation; and samadhi or superconsciousness leading to progressive realizations of higher realities.

1. A fully Self-actualized person is spontaneously im-

pelled to express behaviors which are entirely, constructively supportive of noble purposes and life processes. Until higher impulses and reason direct our actions we need to resist urges and inclinations which, if allowed expression, may further complicate our lives and interfere with orderly relationships. For this reason, one on the spiritual path is advised to refrain from actions (and the thoughts and moods which compel them) which are contrary to the "ways of righteousness." Prohibited actions include doing harm to self or others, untruthfulness, stealing, wasting of vital forces, and the accumulation of unnecessary possessions because of attachment or greed based on feelings of insecurity.

The opposite behaviors to be cultivated are harmlessness; truthfulness; self-responsible actions to provide for our needs; constructive use of vital forces and the transformation of conserved forces into more refined energies which strengthen mental capacities, impart radiance to the body, and support our endeavors to explore and realize higher states of consciousness; and generosity and appropriate use of available resources.

By cultivating harmlessness we experience friendly relationships with a supportive universe. By cultivating truthfulness we become harmoniously attuned to the creative forces and rhythms of nature and experience spontaneous fulfillment of pure desires. By cultivating honest, open relationships we experience true, permanent prosperity and awakened spiritual consciousness. By right use and conservation of vital forces we experience total wellness and more rapid spiritual growth. By cultivating generosity and the ability to appropriately utilize available resources we experience freedom from attachments and expanded states of consciousness.

2. The five intentional practices to be implemented

and actualized are internal and external purity; contentment in all circumstances; disciplines necessary to facilitate psychological transformations; dedicated study and analysis of life processes and the nature and operations of consciousness; and surrender to God.

Cleanliness and purity include attention to personal hygiene; natural diet; a clean, orderly environment; the cultivation of pure thoughts; and behaviors governed by pure intentions. Contentment in all circumstances is possible by self-training in being soul-centered while allowing behaviors to be determined by reason. Disciplines necessary to facilitate psychological transformations are those which enable us to come to terms with our desires, habits, memories, and varied conditioned drives and inclinations, in order to weaken and eliminate destructive or inappropriate conditions and allow noble, divine qualities to be primarily influential. Study and analysis of life processes enable us to function successfully. Insights into the operations of consciousness reveal the truth about ourselves and higher realities. Surrender to God dissolves ego boundaries, allowing spontaneous Self-illumination to be actualized.

The ideal way to proceed is to willingly choose a lifestyle which is entirely supportive of actualizing our highest hopes and is supportive of progressive spiritual growth. We need not be spiritually advanced to enter into these processes, for their cultivation and actualization is determined mostly by decision and participation. If our personal relationships are not harmonious, if psychological unrest disturbs our peace, it will be difficult to pray, meditate, contemplate higher possibilities, or experience clear states of awareness. Therefore, until our actions and circumstances are entirely constructive and supportive, these practices should be given our reasoned considera-

tion and personal participation.

3. The recommended posture for meditation is any upright sitting position which is "easy and pleasant." Sitting with the head erect contributes to mental alertness and allows subtle, vital forces to more easily flow. Meditation should be practiced in a clean, quiet environment free from disturbing influences.

4. During the course of daily living our attention may be preoccupied with physical, mental, and emotional conditions and routine circumstances and relationships. For meditation, attention has to be withdrawn from outer circumstances, and internalized. To facilitate this, it is helpful to cultivate a relaxed, cheerful attitude while engaging in any practical, preliminary procedure which is helpful. Procedure may include prayer, simple pranayama practice, or the giving of one's attention to a meditation mantra; or all of these may be included.

This early stage of meditation practice is preparation for deeper practice, and a transition phase during which the body's vital forces are balanced and a degree of mental calm is established.

5. The meditator then experiences withdrawal of awareness from external conditions, emotions become settled, and mental processes become more subtle. To facilitate internalization of attention it can be helpful to become aware of the spinal pathway and the upper brain, with the inner gaze directed to the spiritual eye center between the eyebrows. Life forces will then be turned back from sensory involvements and encouraged to flow to the higher brain centers. Practice of meditation techniques can be helpful at this stage. These may include *sushumna breathing*, a pranayama technique used to direct life forces through the chakras to the brain; mental mantra practice; listening to the inner sound current (Om); con-

templation of inner light; contemplation of God and the Field of Pure Consciousness; or any other procedure known to be helpful.

6. When attention is internalized and flows exclusively to the object of contemplation, the meditator is established in perfect concentration. Concentration may be defined as effortless, alert attention focused on the chosen object with which one desires to identify or about which one chooses to know.

7. Undisturbed concentration is meditation. While meditating, one should remain relaxed, conscious and alert, without any anxiety about the outcome. Meditation is best experienced by surrendering to the process and letting results unfold naturally.

8. Samadhi, superconsciousness—states of consciousness outside the range of ordinary mental processes—is the inevitable result of proficiency in practice. Samadhi states are transcendental perceptions.

In the early stages, moods and thought processes may be blended with almost-clear states of awareness, so there are lower and higher states of superconsciousness: states during which subtle mental influences are present and states which are pure. Lower or preliminary states are referred to as "superconsciousness with support," because related to mental processes or to perceptions of light, sound, peace, joy, or some other aspect of subtle consciousness-perception. Higher or unqualified states are described as being "without support" because the meditator's awareness has transcended considerations of duality.

Early stages of superconscious experience may be influenced by the meditator's awareness of self-observation of the experience, perhaps with doubts about whether or not the experience is real or valid. This may be followed by absence of doubt and a more obvious awareness of being

identified with the state of consciousness. There may also be the satisfaction of enjoyment of the experience. During preliminary stages of superconsciousness the meditator may experience illusory perceptions: visions or superconscious dreams (superconsciousness influenced by conscious or subconscious mental processes). The meditator is advised to disregard such phenomena, to avoid becoming attached to transitory perceptions regardless of their appeal. Even "oneness" with an object of meditation other than God should be renounced and transcended in favor of Self-realization and liberation of consciousness.

The four, progressive stages of superconsciousness are superconsciousness while observing the experience; superconsciousness experienced without doubt or mental argument as to its validity; superconsciousness which is relatively devoid of attachments to what is perceived, and to illusions; superconsciousness devoid of all disturbing influences, which is absolutely clear or transcendent. Some meditators remain for years (or incarnations) at the first two levels, because of attachment to enjoyment or insufficient inspiration and resolve to go beyond them. When the two higher levels are realized, the meditator's acquired knowledge and inner guidance will facilitate rapid enlightenment. Too, the redemptive influences of grace become increasingly expressive, assuring steady progress.

The meditator is advised to allow all useful meditation perceptions to unfold, while continuing to aspire to direct realization of Pure Consciousness. If transcendental states cannot at first be idealized as possible of attainment, the devotee is encouraged to contemplate what seems to be the highest aspect of Reality, then be willing to go beyond it when higher states are revealed.

As superior knowledge unfolds, unusual abilities may

become pronounced and the meditator may be tempted to remain at levels of knowledge of natural forces because of the possibilities they offer. Knowledge, enjoyed and rightly demonstrated, does not contribute to the creation of problems, and supernatural abilities demonstrated spontaneously, without egocentric influence are harmless. But if there is any self-delusion involved in actions, one must also be aware of possible consequences.

Higher superconscious states contribute to liberation of consciousness. In the early stages of spiritual growth, the devotee's awareness may fluctuate between superconscious states and unregulated involvements with mental and emotional states. With practice, superconsciousness becomes the steady state of awareness and all psychological states and overt actions become harmoniously regulated with little or no personal effort. The mental field becomes purified, all actions are directed by illumined intelligence, and one is free while relating to mundane circumstances. Finally, even the residues of unconscious mental impressions are dissolved and the devotee realizes complete liberation of consciousness. This is referred to as "realization of the Supreme Self."

This "royal path" can be chosen by any devotee of God and is compatible with any useful, outer mode of worship and constructive lifestyle. It is, as described in scriptures of yoga, "not limited by class, place, or time." A person who is not religious in a formal sense can practice meditation with benefit. Awakened spiritual consciousness will result in revelations of final truth. Yoga practices are experimental: they afford the practitioner the opportunity to learn by participation.

Perfect Contemplation for Accomplished Realizations

The practitioner of yoga should primarily be concerned with experiencing superconscious states for the purpose of realizing states of consciousness not ordinarily accessible when conditioned states of consciousness prevail. To do this, perfect contemplation is advised. The practice of it includes concentration, meditation, and identification with the chosen object under consideration. The first five stages of raja yoga relate to external, preliminary processes; the last three stages comprise the practice of perfect contemplation.

When perfect contemplation results in direct access to the inner conditions and states of the meditation object, the meditator becomes accomplished in realization. In this way, understanding of the subjective side of life is possible, solutions to problems are revealed, and that which was formerly hidden from view is clearly seen. The accomplished devotee of God is then able to live skillfully in the world as well as know the inner operations of Nature and the reality of God.

Various soul abilities may unfold as a result of the practice of perfect contemplation for specific purposes. These may also unfold spontaneously as higher realizations blossom. A few of them are the ability to know anything by intuitive means; the ability to know the operations of another person's mind; the ability to attract resources and circumstances as needed or desired; the ability to see through physical matter; the ability to control the elements; the ability to expand awareness to omnipresence; the ability to levitate the body by mere intention. These, and more, are described in religious literature as *siddhis*, "attainments of perfection." They

are by-products of natural spiritual growth or abilities acquired because of intentional practice. If used only to enhance personality-related circumstances, they enable a person to demonstrate a glorified human condition. If used to remove physical and mental restrictions to the flows of creative forces, they contribute to accelerated spiritual growth.

Yoga and Immortality

Since the reasons for our being in this world are to fulfill personal purposes and to grow spiritually, it is obvious that healthy, long life has value. The world is not to be denied, nor is it to be considered our permanent abode. It is to be experienced, nurtured, and transcended. In this way do we satisfy necessary desires, fulfill personal duties and obligations, express our gratitude to Nature for nourishment and support, and awaken from the "dream of mortality" to conscious realization of the Eternal.

Mental weakness, emotional instability, physical illness or disability, and other restrictions make life more difficult and hinder our spiritual progress. Therefore, it is not surprising to discover that knowledge of life processes and ways to enhance their vital expression have been researched and applied through the ages.

The wellness system of choice for practitioners of yoga is Ayurveda: from *ayus*, "life," and *veda*, "knowledge." It is the parent of Oriental, Arabic, and Greek medicine systems and influential to the development of Western medicine (increasingly so in recent times because of awakened interest in holistic and alternative modes of facilitating wellness). While Ayurveda was evolving in northern India, a wellness system known as Siddha Medicine was being researched and practiced in the south-

ern regions of that country. The sage Agastya, to whom a massive literature on the subject is attributed, was one of many siddhas (saintly "perfected beings") who contributed greatly to the refinement and popularization of this approach to wellness and longevity. Sanskrit texts on Ayurveda include *Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita,* and *Ashtanga Hridaya*. Siddha Medicine texts in Tamil are numerous and varied.

Both systems recommend, according to need: a variety of hygienic measures; food choices including herbal compounds; specific therapeutic regimens to restore balance to the patient-client's constitution and maintain wellness; surgery when necessary; psychological counseling; meditation; spiritual instruction; and the cultivation of a purposeful, natural lifestyle. A unique contribution of Siddha Medicine is the use of purified metal oxides prescribed in minute dosages to vitalize body systems. Massage, color therapy, mantras, aromas, and even gemstones worn next to the skin may be prescribed. Extensive knowledge of rejuvenation procedures is recorded in the basic literature.

A trained Ayurvedic physician understands that consciousness is the field of all manifestation, that the patient-client is a spiritual being, and that health is natural when forces and conditions which govern and support wellness are allowed to be influential. It is taught that "anything that contributes to wellness and function can be considered as medicine," including therapeutic procedures, natural substances, kind words, constructive thoughts and attitudes, and the healing influences of cosmic forces. Of supreme importance is to arrange conditions so that one's vital reserves are allowed to express.

A practical approach is that of restoring and maintaining a balance between the primary governing principles

which regulate physiological processes. These governing principles influence everything in the field of Nature, including mental processes and states of consciousness. If illness of any description is present, it is because of lack of spiritual understanding, mental or emotional unrest, or because one is not living in harmony with Nature and the forces and energies which govern universal processes. This wellness approach is more concerned with "what kind of person has the disease" than with "what kind of disease the person is manifesting."

Procedures are recommended to control disease symptoms but the major emphasis is to remove the underlying causes of the symptoms so that perfect health can be actualized and maintained. Ayurvedic and Siddha Medicine texts hint at the possibility of physical immorality and there is the suggestion that some yogis had this as an ideal to demonstrate in actuality. Of course, no person or creature lives forever in (or through) a physical form because the universe itself is subject to manifestation and nonmanifestation.

A Self-realized soul knows itself to be a ray of Supreme Consciousness and is not fully identified with the realms of mind and matter. The average person, subject to inner and outer conditions of which he has scant knowledge and over which little control can be exercised, experiences a kind of "living death." He lives but seems incapable of preventing the decay of his body and the unwanted changes which occur in his personal world of relationships and circumstances. He knows he is not in control and he despairs, often compromising himself in exchange for modest degrees of comfort and security. A more conscious person will, instead, implement actions to adjust circumstances to conform to higher values and improve secular and spiritual understanding in order to enter into a more

intentional, successful relationship with the universe. This accomplished, increasing degrees of cosmic consciousness can unfold even while routine activities continue and necessary duties are attended to with appropriate care.

Some illumined souls, such as Mahavatar Babaji and a few others who are known, have demonstrated that exceptionally long life in the body is possible. Babaji has maintained youthful vitality for several hundred years and there are others who are said to have been embodied for a thousand or more years. By utilizing certain, subtle regeneration procedures and because of the influence of their superior divine realizations, their bodies are not subject to the ravages of disease and decay.

All souls are immortal. Conscious immortality in relationship with universal processes is the ideal until transcendental realizations remove awareness from mundane involvements and only flawless realization of Absolute Consciousness-Existence remains.

The Restoration and Teaching of Kriya Yoga in Our Awakening World

In our present time-cycle the transmission of Kriya Yoga teachings is flowing from the source of all knowledge through lines of illumined gurus and their initiate disciples. This enlightenment path is for all who can discern its value and choose to adhere to its lifestyle regimens and spiritual practices. Kriya Yoga, the way of ordered living and direct realization of God, is ideally applicable to the needs of sincere truth seekers in our era. It is only recently, since humanity's collective consciousness emerged from the last Dark Age cycle, that increasing numbers of people have become sufficiently receptive to the philosophical implications of this teaching and are

able to appreciate and derive benefits from its practices.

It was the mortal-immortal saint known as Babaji who restored these ancient teachings and arranged for them to be taught more openly to qualified persons in the mainstream of secular society.

Babaji ("revered" or "holy" father) is the name commonly used in India to designate a holy man, as *Mataji* is the name used when referring to a woman saint. Very little is known about Babaji, who many consider to be a *mahavatar* ("great divine incarnation") through whom all of the accomplishments of spiritual perfection are spontaneously expressed.

There are many illumined spiritual masters now on Earth, and many of them are assisted by Babaji because it is his role to inspire and support all who are actively involved in meeting the real needs of souls now awakening to higher levels of understanding. While acknowledged as the one who restored the formerly hidden practices of Kriya Yoga, Babaji's work is not confined to this teaching tradition, nor is his influence restricted to Planet Earth. He is a *siddha*, a liberated being who is on Earth to be a conduit through which redemptive spiritual and cosmic forces flow to cleanse planetary consciousness and accelerate mass spiritual growth.

Babaji has been embodied for centuries and has been known by various names at different times and places. Some titles of respect given him by disciples of Lahiri Mahasaya, and others, are Mahamuni Baba ("Supreme Ecstatic Father"), Mahayogi ("the Great Yogi"), and Trambak Baba or Shiva Baba (names which relate him to God in the aspect of dissolver of forms and circumstances that they might be formed and manifested anew). There is some evidence to indicate that he was known to village people in the Nainital District of the Himalayas in the first

two decades of the 20th century, and in more recent years certain spiritually advanced Kriya Yoga devotees have had personal contact with him. However, reports circulated early in the second half of this century purporting to announce Babaji's presence at an ashram in north India were false, despite the claims made.

Paramahansaji said that Babaji could be communed with in meditation and sometimes described his own experiences of this nature. While ever willing to bless devotees, Babaji's wish is that souls seek Self-realization, their own conscious relationship with the Infinite.

Shyamacharan Lahiri (Mahasaya)

In the village of Ghurni, in the district of Nadia in Bengal, on September 30, 1828, a soul who was to play an influential role in introducing the science of Kriya Yoga to the multitudes, was born into the Lahiri family and given the name Shyamacharan. In later years he would be referred to, by devotees, as Lahiri Mahasaya (Lahiri "whose mind and consciousness is large or expanded").

At school, Lahiri was exposed to various languages, including English, Sanskrit, Urdu, Hindi, Bengali, and Persian. Possessed of abundant vitality, he was active in sports and would often swim in the Ganges River. At eighteen years of age he was married to Kashimoni Devi. Although they did not begin their family until after Lahiri's initiation by Babaji, they did become the parents of five children: two sons and three daughters.

Lahiri Mahasaya was employed as a clerk of the military engineering department of the Indian government, which was then involved in road building projects. While attending to secular and family duties and responsibilities, he practiced meditation in the privacy of his

home on a regular schedule.

In 1861 Lahiri was transferred to Ranikhet, a forest region near Nainital in the foothills of the Himalayas. One afternoon, while wandering about on Drongiri Mountain because he had been told by some local people that "saints lived there," he was hailed by a man who informed him, "A holy man wants to see you."

Following his new acquaintance, he was led to a cave from which a youthful appearing yogi emerged and addressed him: "Shayamacharan, you have come!" The holy man was Mahavatar Babaji, who had, by telepathic means, arranged events so that the guru-disciple relationship which had been theirs for several incarnations could be renewed.

Lahiri was taken to a cave and shown the simple belongings of a recluse: a water pot, meditation blanket, and other personal items. At Babaji's touch Lahiri's memories of a previous incarnation flooded his mind, causing him to remember the cave as a place where he had formerly engaged in meditation practice. Babaji informed his disciple: "The Kriya path is really your own. Your ancestor, Sage Shandilya, authored the *Shandilya Upanishad.*" The book to which Babaji referred is a treatise on advanced yoga practices which predates Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*; the latter being a compendium of primary essentials for understanding and mastering higher states of consciousness leading to liberation.

Soon after their initial meeting Babaji gave Lahiri a cup of mineral oil to drink, instructing him to go to a nearby river in the forest to rest until the treatment had cleansed his body. Initiation into Kriya Yoga meditation processes was then given, after which Lahiri experienced several days in superconscious bliss and higher samadhi states. At the initiation site Babaji materialized a golden

palace by willing subtle element-influences in space to manifest. He explained to Lahiri that he did this to fulfill the disciple's subconscious desire which had persisted from a prior incarnation. During the next two weeks Lahiri was instructed in all of the intricate Kriya techniques and procedures.

The momentum of his previous spiritual practices and the blessing of his guru enabled Lahiri to master in a relatively short duration of time that which often requires an average devotee many years to accomplish. Having been highly illumined in previous incarnations, he quickly awakened to transcendental states of consciousness.

While with Babaji and his small group of disciples, Lahiri observed many interesting incidents. On one occasion he visited a nearby temple and there, at night, observed a saint coming to the temple to worship. A bright halo of light surrounded the saint whom Babaji later said was Dronacharya, who had lived in that mountain region hundreds of years before with the Pandavas, the virtuous faction of a family dynasty which engaged in the civil war later written about in the epic *Mahabharata*.

Before leaving Ranikhet, Lahiri initiated a few disciples into Kriya practices at the behest of Babaji. Before sending Lahiri back to his home and secular duties, Babaji somewhat modified the former ages-old restrictions concerning yogic initiation, agreeing that it was now appropriate to encourage wider dissemination of Kriya Yoga teachings and practices.

In Banaras, Lahiri lived an outwardly normal secular life while attending to his spiritual practices at night. He taught his disciples to do likewise, initiating into Kriya Yoga over five thousand devotees during his remaining years on Earth. Some highly advanced yogis were also initiated by him, including Swami Sri Yukteswar, Swami

Pranabananda, Keshavananda Avadhut, Sri Shastri Mahasaya, Srimat Bhupendranath, Dayal Maharaj, and Ram Gopal. Swami Trailinga, a famous saint of that era, once publicly acknowledged Lahiri to his disciples, saying: "I have renounced everything for that which Lahiri Mahasaya has been given by God."

Twenty-two small books, commentaries on various scriptures prepared from Lahiri's notes and comments to disciples, were permitted by him to be published for distribution to Kriya Yoga devotees. He would not allow any formal, organized efforts to be made to popularize him or spread the teaching, but recommended that Kriya Yoga be transmitted to those who were attracted to him and through some of his qualified disciples.

Lahiri, with Babaji's permission, taught Kriya meditation techniques in sequential order, with simple processes given first and the more advanced techniques taught as a disciple's proficiency in practice improved. Following Babaji's advice regarding initiating others, before imparting instruction in practice he first satisfied himself that persons requesting initiation were of sound character and would be committed to practice. He told new disciples to follow his example—to live an ordered life while attending to meditation practices in private circumstances. Several modest ashrams were later founded by some of his renunciate disciples, but the major emphasis was upon encouraging devotees to fulfill their family and social obligations while living a God-centered life.

When Paramahansa Yogananda was an infant his parents, both disciples of Lahiri Mahasaya, took him to their guru's home to be blessed by the master. Holding the child on his lap he pronounced, "Your son will be a great spiritual engine and will carry many souls to God."

When Babaji met Sri Yukteswar in 1894, he told him

to take a message to Lahiri: that Lahiri's earthly sojourn was soon to be concluded. Six months before his transition, Lahiri told his wife about his plans to depart during the month of September, 1895. On the 26th day of that month, which was the occasion for celebrating *Mahastami*, the second day of worship of the Divine Mother aspect of God as Durga (one of many aspects of God's creative energy), a ritual ceremony was being performed in the home of a neighbor. During this religious rite, the most significant moment is at the transition of the phase of the moon as it becomes brighter from the eighth to the ninth day. At that moment, Lahiri opened his eyes for a moment, then closed them and retired into meditation to make his conscious departure from the body.

The following day, after his body had been cremated at the Manikarnika Ghat by the Ganges River, a disciple, Swami Keshavananda, was in his room when a great light manifested to him. Lahiri Mahasaya appeared in a material body, younger and more radiant than before, and said, "My householder work in the world is done, but I do not leave the Earth entirely. Henceforth, I shall spend some time with Babaji in the Himalayas and in the cosmos."

Swami Sri Yukteswar

Because of his superior realization and keen intellectual powers, Swami Sri Yukteswar was often referred to by Paramahansa Yogananda as a *Jnanavatar* ("incarnation of knowledge-wisdom"). The monastic name Yukteswar (*yuk*, "union," *Ishwara*, "God as the regulator of cosmic processes") was assumed when the master accepted initiation into a monastic order several years after he met Lahiri Mahasaya.

Born in 1855, he was given the name Priya Nath.

Karar was his family name. As a young adult he attended college lectures on anatomy and medicine, married, and fathered a daughter. He provided for the needs of his family by managing various properties which he inherited from his father. After the death of his wife at a young age, he more actively sought spiritual advice from various teachers until he was led to Lahiri Mahasaya and was initiated into Kriya Yoga meditation practice. Much later, after teaching for several years, he entered the renunciate order and changed his name to Yukteswar.

A master of yoga, he was also an astrologer of repute and knowledgeable in Ayurvedic principles. In his small book, *The Holy Science*, he detailed his insights into the relationships between world events and cosmic time cycles. Modest ashrams for the training of disciples were established at Puri on the Bay of Bengal, Serampore near Calcutta, and Banaras. He traveled between these cities and to many village areas to teach Kriya Yoga philosophy and practice.

Adept as a spiritual healer, Sri Yukteswar seldom openly displayed his exceptional powers. He was compassionate while remaining practical. When Paramahansaji, as a teenage disciple, thought of forsaking family relationships, his guru asked, "Why exclude family from your love of God?" He was sometimes direct in his approach to teaching disciples. To one whose nature was devotional but needed encouragement to cultivate intellectual capacities, Sri Yukteswar commented, "Saintliness is not dumbness!" Paramahansaji said of him, "He could have been one of the most sought-after gurus in India if it were not that he was so strict in his training of disciples."

Paramahansaji remained with Sri Yukteswar for ten years before being sent by him to the West in 1920. At that time, Sri Yukteswar said to him, "Go now and all doors will

open to you." He expressed keen interest in the unfoldment of the work in America and, in 1935, asked Paramahansaji to return to India to visit him.

On March 9, 1936, Sri Yukteswar made his conscious transition at his Puri ashram and his body was buried there. Three months after his passing, in a hotel room in Bombay, Paramahansaji saw and conversed with Sri Yukteswar in his "resurrected" form. At that time his guru gave him personal information about world trends, explained in detail about life in subtle realms, and said that his new mission was that of helping spiritually advanced souls in high astral spheres to awaken to causal perceptions and transcendental states of consciousness.

Paramahansaji assumed responsibility for continuing the organized activities in India founded by his guru. Some of Sri Yukteswar's other disciples were also authorized to teach Kriya Yoga independently, and some of them established ashrams for this purpose.

Paramahansa Yogananda

Although the science of yoga was somewhat known in America in the early years of the 20th century, it was my guru who brought the message of India's sages to the West with far-reaching influence and established it on a firm foundation.

Born Mukunda Lal Ghosh on January 5, 1893, in Gorakhpur in northeastern India near the Himalayas, he was one of eight children. His parents were disciples of Lahiri Mahasaya and guided their children with love and fairly strict discipline. As a boy, Paramahansaji was nurtured in relative comfort: his father was an executive in a railroad company and a director of a bank he helped organize in a community near where the family lived.

Spiritually baptized by Lahiri Mahasaya at the age of one year, as he grew older the boy Mukunda often visited saints and yogis, learning from them and being further motivated on his enlightenment quest. He once mentioned that he had been conscious in his mother's womb and later recalled his previous incarnations as a yogi.

When he was twelve years of age he entered his attic meditation room in the family home in Calcutta to pray unceasingly until he experienced God directly. Years later he told of that event—of how, after hours of meditation, he experienced transcendental states for forty-eight hours. He was also initiated into Kriya Yoga meditation practice by a disciple of Lahiri Mahasaya who had been retained by his father to provide lessons in Sanskrit.

Just before entering college Paramahansaji met his guru, Sri Yukteswar, and began a decade of intensive spiritual training. After receiving his college degree he was initiated by his guru into the swami order and chose the monastic name Swami Yogananda.

Before leaving India for America, Paramahansaji was active in the organizational work of his guru and founded a residential school for boys for the purpose of providing a balanced approach to education, which included studies in philosophy and yoga practice. While meditating at the school in Ranchi, he had a vision in which he saw vast numbers of people whom he intuitively knew would be his students and disciples in America. A few days later he received an invitation to speak at a religious conference being planned in Boston, Massachusetts. He promptly accepted the invitation and, because of the generous financial assistance from his father, was able to travel to Boston and remain after the conference was concluded.

There, he taught classes and accepted his first American disciples. Before long, he was to tour the major cities

of the country, speaking to large audiences and teaching them how to meditate using Kriya Yoga procedures. Wherever he went he was hosted by civic and business leaders. While in Washington, D.C. to lecture, he was welcomed to the White House by President Calvin Coolidge. Adapting modern communication methods, Paramahansaji was extremely effective in introducing his teachings to multiplied thousands of people. He knew that everyone who attended his mass gatherings would not be able to fully comprehend the import of his message or sustain their spiritual practices after he left their community. Of those, he said, "At least I am planting spiritual seeds in their minds, which may later sprout and grow." From time to time, he did meet with persons who were immediately responsive to Kriya Yoga practices and remained lifelong disciples and faithful supporters of his mission.

During a Los Angeles lecture series he scouted the region for a site suitable for the establishment of a permanent headquarters facility. While driving through the Mount Washington community near Highland Park, a suburb of Los Angeles, he saw a large estate which included a sixty-room hotel. Walking the grounds of the estate he said, "This place feels like ours!" Upon inquiry, it was discovered that the property was for sale, and with the aid of generous friends and students, negotiations went forward and the facility was dedicated in 1925.

Paramahansaji's only return visit to India was during the years 1935-1936. It was then that Sri Yukteswar bestowed upon him the further monastic title of Paramahansa, denoting one who is able to discern truth and live it in the world. Enroute to India with a small travel party comprised of disciples, parts of Europe were traversed by car. In India, he spent time with Sri Yukteswar, visited

various ashrams, met saints, and lectured and taught in several cities.

Upon returning to America my guru focused his energies on writing, working with disciples, and weekly lectures in Los Angeles and San Diego. Midweek classes were also offered from time to time at the Encinitas hermitage. Two new temples were dedicated in the early 1940s and during the two years prior to his passing he supervised the planning and building of an addition to the Hollywood temple, dedicated the Lake Shrine in Pacific Palisades, and spent much time in seclusion at his retreat house in the Mojave Desert area.

Before his mahasamadhi on March 7, 1952, to disciples who asked about their attunement with him after he was gone from their midst, he said, "If you think me near, I will be near." To me, he said, "Whenever you initiate anyone into Kriya Yoga, I, or one of the gurus, will always be there."

He left behind an organization staffed by dedicated disciples whom he had personally trained to continue the dissemination of Kriya Yoga teachings, and a number of disciples who represent this tradition independent of organizational affiliation. He was aware that transmission of the teaching and the flow of grace through the guru line would continue through his spiritually advanced disciples and those trained and initiated by them.

After his passing, some representatives of his organization announced that he would be the last in the line of Kriya Yoga gurus to be acknowledged by them. Fortunately, such a decree cannot prevent the continued flow of illuminating power through Kriya Yoga initiates who awaken to their relationship with the Infinite and continue to serve as representatives of the tradition.

Before leaving India in 1920, Paramahansaji prayed

for Babaji's blessing and guidance. Babaji visited him, gave assurance of his blessing, and said, "Kriya Yoga will ultimately spread to all lands, and aid in the harmonizing of the nations through individual, transcendental perception of God."

The divine impulse, first manifested in a remote mountain area in the Himalayas in 1861, expanded slowly at the beginning and is now spreading with increasing influence to unfold events that will fulfill the prophecy.

COSMIC TIME-CYCLES AND THE NEW ERA

Secular history provides incomplete knowledge of mankind's past. Catastrophic geological changes, shifting patterns of weather and climate, and periodic episodes of advance and decline of civilizations have obscured or concealed evidence and the passage of time has dimmed memories of it.

It is known that, since approximately 10,000 B.C., following the glacial melting after the last Ice Age, organized societies emerged in India, the Middle and Far East, parts of Europe, Egypt and Africa, and the Americas. Representatives of some of these groups were widely traveled by sea and land, cultural influences were blended and the resulting transmission of knowledge and learned behaviors modified philosophical attitudes and social circumstances. In India, for instance, the Aryans first dominated the indigenous people but were later influenced by their customs and philosophical views. Many Western educators today refer to Greece as the cradle of Western culture, unaware (or unwilling to admit) that much of classical Greek philosophy was adapted from Indian sources. And few Christians know that most of their traditions, beliefs and religious practices are those of prior cultures which were accommodated as a matter of practical convenience. Adam (the name means "man") was not a person but is the archetype, the original pattern or model, the progenitor of the human race, and is variously

named in many philosophical systems of the world.

Planet Earth is ideally distanced from the sun, approximately ninety million miles, to enable Nature to flourish and us to be fruitful. Even so, with conditions as suitable as they are, not all regions of the planet are comfortable for human life. There are also periodic and often surprising land mass changes and weather variations which serve as reminders that we are not always invulnerable to Nature's ways. Many past civilizations have been completely eliminated and others damaged. New challenges confront us in our present era, because of rapid population growth, industrialization, increased pollution of the environment, and misuse of natural resources. Formerly, man's impact on the environment was more localized. Today, because of a much larger population and the far-reaching influences of activities which coincide with what is considered to be material progress, imprudent behavior can have a more dramatic effect, often contributing to the discomfort, unwellness, and insecurity of millions of people who are not personally responsible for primary causes.

Our focus here, however, is upon how states of consciousness contribute to our ability to perceive and function, and how this relates to our personal circumstances and social conditions. For this, it can be useful to examine the theory of cosmic time-cycles as known to ancient seers and more recently examined and explained in a new light by Sri Yukteswar in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Doing so can enable us to more fully understand the influences of fine cosmic forces upon the electrical properties of the mental field of man which contain the subtle organs of perception. Our perceptual abilities make possible our cognition of the objective world as well as our ability to conceptualize the theory of the *yugas*—the Ages

or eras of time in which world events occur.

Great Time (*maha-kala*) is nondimensional: the time-field out of which universes emerge and into which they are eventually dissolved. For our present purposes we will examine relative time, keeping Great Time in mind because the whole of the field of time must be considered even while relative matters are pondered. The duration required for our planet to orbit the sun is the solar year of approximately 365 days, a day being the time required for the planet to rotate completely on its axis. One twenty-fourth of a day is an hour and 1/60th of an hour is a minute. A further division by 60 results in the number of seconds in a minute. Some of the ancients calculated seasonal time another way, by lunar months, which is a few days shorter than the average month as commonly calculated.

The average potential life span for a human being in our current Age is generally assumed to be 120 years. Twenty to thirty years separate each generation—the time it takes for humans to grow to maturity and reproduce. Races also have their life spans, usually thousands of years before dying off or being assimilated into other races. Humanity as a whole has life-waves, with each successive emergence being more evolved. These life-waves progress in intervals of several thousands of years. Universes have beginnings and endings. Universal manifestation is referred to as its Day and the duration of non-manifestation of a universe is referred to as Night. A reference to this is described in the *Bhagavad Gita* (8:17-22):

> Those who know that the day of God is of the duration of a thousand Ages and that the night of God is a thousand Ages long, they are knowers of Day and Night. At the coming of the Day, all manifested things come forth from the Unmanifested and at the coming of

> the Night they merge into that same Source. This very same multitude of existences, arising again and again, merges helplessly at the coming of Night and streams forth into being (again) at the coming of the Day. But beyond this Unmanifested there is yet another Eternal Being who does not cease even when all creation is withdrawn. This is called the Imperishable. Souls which realize this condition never again become involved with outward creation. This Reality is the Supreme Essence of all life. In This all existences abide and It pervades all creation. It can be realized by steady devotion.

Shaiva philosophers, whose Indian history predates the Aryan, centuries ago evolved an elaborate explanation of world cycles based on astronomical observations. They knew of major planets and star systems and were advanced in the sciences of mathematics, medicine, and language. Later, with the advent of writing (perhaps about 3000 B.C.), they compiled extensive texts detailing their discoveries.

Because of present lack of available knowledge, and the tendency of traditionalists to cling to unreasonable theories, many who today expound on world cycles proclaim that we are presently passing through a Dark Age or *Kali Yuga*, during which there is little hope of improvement of circumstances and a more certain possibility of impending global disaster. Partially awakened people, lacking the basic information here presented, or being unable to comprehend it, continue to refer to our present era as a Dark Age. Also, pessimists and doomsday proponents, lacking in both zest for life and curiosity about higher realities, may enjoy a morbid preoccupation with world scenarios in which hopelessness is more appealing than are opportunities for discovery and spiritual growth.

A twenty-four thousand year sequence of cycles, with

twelve thousand years descending and twelve thousand years ascending, was known before and during the beginning of the present era of history. Later, for reasons we shall learn, their calculations were misinterpreted, resulting in general confusion about cyclical patterns. In an ancient text, the *Manu Samhita*, is found reference to World Ages:

> Four thousand years, they say is the Golden Age of the world. Its morning twilight has as many hundreds and its period of evening dusk is of the same length. In the other three Ages, with their morning and evening twilights, the thousands and hundreds decrease by one. That fourfold cycle comprising 12,000 years is called an Age of the Gods. The sum of a thousand divine ages constitutes one day of Brahma; and of the same length is its night.

The four World Ages are related to the precession of the equinoxes: the earlier occurrence of the equinoxes in each successive sidereal year because of a slow retrograde motion of the equinoctial points along the ecliptic, which most modern astronomers declare to be a 26,000 year cycle. Some say the cycle is closer to 24,000 years in duration because star and planetary movements are not always constant. Our solar system is located toward the outer rim of the Milky Way Galaxy, which is hundreds of trillions of miles across. Light, traveling at approximately 186,000 miles a second, would require nearly 100,000 years to traverse the distance from one side of our galaxy to the other. Billions of suns, nuclear reactors, shine in our galaxy, many of them far larger than our own. Billions of galaxies exist in our universe, separated from us by trillions of light years.

Sri Yukteswar first shared his interpretation of cosmic cycles in his small book, *The Holy Science*, written and

published in 1894 at the request of Mahavatar Babaji. After careful analysis, Sri Yukteswar concluded that a 24,000 year cycle, the time it takes for the sun to return to its place, as calculated to be Aries 0 degrees, corresponded to the Ages referred to in the *Manu Samhita*, with four descending Ages occurring during a 12,000 year period and another four ascending Ages unfolding during a subsequent 12,000 year period.

According to this theory, bodies in space exchange energies which influence their respective magnetic fields. Our sun orbits its dual during the 24,000 year cycle and our solar system is acted upon by a creative power source at the center of our galaxy. When the influences from this central seat of power become weaker, according to our position in relationship to it, the electrical properties of the mental field of humanity somewhat decline, contributing to a diminishment of intellectual powers. When the influences from the central seat of power become stronger, the intellectual powers of man on the planet become correspondingly improved. During the time-phase when intellectual capacities are diminished, the majority of Earth's inhabitants experience a Dark Age. During the time-phase when intellectual capacities are pronounced, a more enlightened human condition prevails, and is referred to as a Golden Age. Between these extremes are periods of varying degrees of soul awareness and functional abilities, which result in world conditions described as sequential descending and ascending Ages. The central seat of power in our galaxy is referred to in Sanskrit literature as *Vishnunabi* (the "navel of Vishnu"), also *Brahma*—in this instance meaning "universal magnetism" which regulates the mental virtues and capacities. Sri Yukteswar taught that this force acts upon life units in proximity to it, using celestial bodies as distribution

points through which energies are directed.

Each 12,000 year cycle brings about a complete change in the mental condition of the majority of people on the planet. There are always some souls so spiritually advanced that they are little influenced by external forces. They remain the custodians of wisdom and function as teachers of the race. A 12,000 year phase during which one-half of the sun's orbit is completed is an Electric Time-Cycle. The full 24,000 year phase is an Electric Couple, of two 12,000 year cycles, one descending and one ascending.

A Dark Age is 1,200 years in duration, calculating 1,000 years as the duration of the major time-cycle plus 100 years before and after as durations of mutation from one Age to another. This represents 1/20th of the sun's complete orbit. The mental capacity of the average person on Earth during this cycle is but one-fourth developed, so that man cannot comprehend anything but the most obvious, objective matters. He is then materialistic. *Kali Yuga* means the era of "quarrel" or "conflict" and not necessarily an era of total destruction and death. According to Sri Yukteswar's calculations, the last Dark Age ended around A.D. 1700—that period marking the conclusion of two Dark Age cycles, one descending and one ascending.

The second ascending cycle of 2,400 years, when the sun moves through 2/20ths of its orbit, is the Electric Age now occurring. Intellectual ability at this time is sufficient to allow comprehension of fine forces in Nature, the electricities and their attributes, and the existence and operations of magnetic fields. This era is characterized by doubt and uncertainty because full knowledge has not yet unfolded in the majority of people. It is called *Dwapara* ("after the two") because when cycles manifest in descending order it follows *Treta Yuga*, the second from *Satya*

Yuga, "the Age of Truth and Knowledge."

Under the influence of the ascending Electrical Cycle, Dark Age influences are waning and evolution is rapidly accelerating, resulting in dramatic social changes, scientific progress, and transformations of religious and philosophical thought. During the final years of the last Dark Age man began to observe, as predicted, the existence of fine properties in matter and began to use them to serve the common good. About A.D. 1600 William Gilbert discovered magnetic forces and electrical properties. Kepler discovered significant laws of astronomy, Galileo produced the telescope, and Drebbel of Holland soon after invented the microscope. Newton observed the law of gravitation and the steam engine came into use for industrial purposes. During the morning twilight phase of our current Age, electricity was harnessed, the telegraph and telephone invented, airplanes were utilized, radio and television opened the world, atomic power was unleashed, satellites were sent into orbit, man walked on the moon, the solar system began to be explored by space probes and advanced telescopes, and the healing influences of magnetism and electric currents were investigated. Having now passed through the two hundred year beginning mutation phase, new discoveries will continue with startling frequency.

The present time-cycle will continue until A.D. 4,100, bringing vast improvements in matters relating to the wellness of Earth and its inhabitants. War will be forgotten, poverty will be eradicated, new power sources will replace fossil fuels, the recycling of natural resources will be commonplace, global population will stabilize, crime will diminish, hunger will no longer be a problem, most illnesses will have cures, people will live in harmony, society will be cultured, and interest in spiritual growth

will increase.

The following ascending time-cycle of 3,600 years, during which the sun moves through 3/20ths of its orbit, will be a Mental Age when human intellect is able to comprehend the *source* of electric forces upon which creation is based, as well as the existence of individual and cosmic mind. Telepathy will be common, advanced intellectual powers will be demonstrated, and the forces of mind and Nature will be used in entirely benevolent ways.

The remaining fourth period, during which the sun moves through 4/20ths of its orbit, is called a true Age of Enlightenment or Golden Age. During this time-cycle, intuitive abilities will be pronounced and the inner nature of consciousness will be easily apprehended. After 4,800 years a descending time-cycle of equal duration will follow, leading to a decline of civilization in accord with the pattern of World Ages which has been manifesting since man first appeared on the planet. The Golden Age, then, is almost 10,000 years in duration, with the other Ages less and the Dark Age the shortest (but actually equal in duration to Dwapara Yuga because two occur in sequence).

Each Golden Age is more enlightened than ones which precede it and each Dark Age is less dark than its predecessors. As civilizations rise and fall, souls incarnate during time-phases when their personal needs and karmic conditions can be best served. In this way, by the law of correspondences, souls flow to circumstances most opportune for their learning, growth, and inclination to serve the cause of evolution. Among the general population are represented the various stages through which mankind as a whole moves through the Ages. We have among us many who are still in a Dark Age consciousness, some who can comprehend finer forces, a few who are mentally superior, and those who are nearly enlightened.

There are also many fully enlightened souls among us. As the Ages advance, the percentages will change to correspond with the prevailing times. Devotees on an enlightenment path who understand this theory of cosmic time-cycles, should not be content to remain subject to them. They should attend to spiritual practices and learn to live from an inner state of grace so that, for them, any time-cycle is an Age of Enlightenment.

Some seers, who have studied the phenomenon of time-cycles, assert that every 6,000 years mankind undergoes a minor dramatic adjustment in the course of evolution, and every 12,000 years a major one. We may be now moving through one of those periods of major change. It does not, however, mark a period of disaster, but of internal transformation and constructive outer modification. The decade of the 1980s was referred to by many seers as "the hour of God" because it was a transition-phase into more intense involvement with influential cosmic forces, and a period of stress because of rapid changes within people and in outer circumstances.

The radiance of Ages of Enlightenment lingers because poets and philosophers preserve stories and sometimes leave more permanent records. Knowledge of higher realities, being grounded in consciousness, is never completely removed from the planet. Esoteric, inner, teachings are transmitted to initiates of all Ages. During Dark Age time-cycles "the people of knowledge" usually remain quiet, perhaps living within the mainstream of society but not overt in action or public declaration of what they know. Some withdraw from society and pursue their intellectual and spiritual investigations in remote places. History has recorded that things have not always gone well for individuals who were too obviously ahead of their time.

It may be of interest to the reader to learn why so many

people are today mistaken about where we are in the sequence of World Ages. Sri Yukteswar's research revealed the reason for this error. Traditional sources claim that the Dark Age is 432,000 years in duration. The reason for this is that, in India around 700 B.C. during the reign of Raja Parikshit, certain events occurred which contributed to the confusion. Prior to this time Maharaja Yudhisthira, noticing evidence of a coming Dark Age, turned his throne over to his grandson and retired to the seclusion of the Himalayan Mountains, taking with him his astronomers and astrologers. He left no one in the remaining court who could correctly calculate the movements of celestial bodies. The astronomers who were available, not wanting to contribute to public fear and anxiety by announcing an impending Dark Age, instead recorded the time as the beginning of an ascending Electrical Cycle. Around A.D. 499 the mistake in the almanac was discovered, but not the reason for it.

The almanac recorded the duration of a Dark Age period of 1,200 years instead of two consecutive periods of equal length, one descending and one ascending. The later astronomers then wrongly concluded that the Dark Age years were not really solar years but were "years of the gods," with one such year being a Divine Day and 1,200 years therefore being 432,000 solar years (1,200 times 360 being the basis of the estimate). Now, in the early phase of the ascending Electric Cycle (Dwapara 193 as of this writing), many people still cling to the mistaken ideas of the past and are either unwilling to examine the facts or too incompetent to grasp them. Influenced by irrational theories they continue in their confusion and uncertainty.

I have known many reasonably "enlightened" people who have not been able to rid themselves of their erroneous, traditional opinions about World Ages. But, then,

nonuseful tradition is often one of the last vestiges of illusion to depart our consciousness.

One who is accomplished in yoga, who is established in realization of the true Self, is impervious to opinions which flourish in shallow minds and to the currents of change which determine the processions of the Ages.

GLOSSARY

If word meanings are not known, comprehension of written or verbal communications will be incomplete. Refer to this glossary until the following key words are clearly understood.

Absolute: The nondual field of Supreme Consciousness. The Transcendental Field, devoid of modifications yet containing the essence of all possibilities. The field of Pure Consciousness.

actualize: To "make real" or bring into manifestation. We actualize our potential when we demonstrate it. Our goals and aims in life are actualized when they are achieved or fulfilled.

advaita: Nonduality. The teaching that everything in the field of Nature is an expression of Consciousness.

ahamkara: Personal sense of individuality which may result in our feeling that we are separate from God. The basis of egoism or "self-sense." When grounded in self-sense the soul falsely assumes itself to be independent of its origins and tends to identify with thoughts, moods, and sense-perceived objects.

akasha: The first of five material element-principles making up the field of manifest Nature. Translated into English as *ether* or fine substance-essence; and as *space* in which exist primary cosmic forces which are not-yet-matter. The other four element-influences and their manifestations are: air, or gaseous substances; fire, the heating, transforming influences; water, or liquefying influences; and earth, which causes gross matters to

manifest. *Akasha* or space contains all of the substance-essences because out of it all influences and forms can manifest. The manifesting essences—air, fire, water, and earth—are said to express one-half of the dominant manifestation and one-eighth portion of each of the other substance-essences. Thus air or gaseous substance is said to be one-half air substance-influence with one-eighth portion of the others; fire influence is one-half fire substance-influence with one-eighth portion of the others, and so on. All element manifestations have origins in the field of Primal Nature which, in turn, has origins in the field of the Godhead. Spiritual masters and scientists who clearly comprehend that "everything is One Thing" can learn how to transform matter. Mahavatar Babaji, for instance, once poured water into a fire to cause it to blaze more actively. The water was instantly transformed into oil as it entered the flames. Babaji explained to a disciple how he did this by an act of will or intention: "I 'look' for the oil in the water." Mastery of this process enables an accomplished seer to manipulate the elements and materialize and dematerialize forms.

ananda: Bliss. Not an emotional sensation, but the pure perception of existence-being-knowledge.

asana: Pose, or posture. *Yogasanas* are the various postures assumed when practicing hatha yoga. Sitting poses are used for meditation and contemplation. The ideal asana for meditation is one which is steady, pleasant, and comfortable.

ashram: A quiet, secluded abode for study and spiritual practice. Ideally, an ashram should provide a supportive environment in which residents can live without distractions. Only elevating influences should prevail, so that all the desirable qualities are encouraged to naturally unfold.

astral realm: The subtle sphere pervading the cosmos, comprised of life forces and electricities. Souls come into physical embodiment from the astral realm and return to it between earthly

incarnations. Spiritually advanced souls may pass through the astral realm or transcend it, to continue their awakening in finer spheres or to awaken completely from relationship with manifest realms.

atma: The real Self of every person and creature. It is this real Self (soul) which is to be consciously experienced by the truth seeker. With Self-realization one is able to know and realize *Paramatman*, the Supreme Self beyond relativities.

avatar: The descent of divine power into human form, a full incarnation of divine qualities. Usually such manifestations are for the purpose of infusing planetary consciousness with superior influences. Sometimes avatars play outwardly dramatic roles. At other times they remain unknown even to others close to them. Their redemptive work is completely in harmony with God's will or the course of evolution. The "universal avatar" concept should also be understood: God dwells equally in and *as* every soul. To the degree that divine capacities are actualized through human beings, in like degree is the collective consciousness of the human species illumined.

avidya: Literally, "not knowledge," in contrast to *vidya* or full knowledge of Supreme Consciousness and the categories of cosmic manifestation. As *avidya* results in delusion, so *vidya* is enlightenment.

ayurveda: The several thousand year-old system of wellness researched and developed in India. *See a more complete description of ayurveda in the appendix.*

Bhagavad Gita: "God's glorious celestial song." A portion of the much longer *Mahabharata* epic and one of the primary scriptures of Hindus enjoyed by millions of readers worldwide. In it, the author presents Krishna as a divine incarnation or avatar, explaining the philosophy of *sanatana dharma*, "the eternal way of righteousness," to his disciple, Arjuna. Frequent reading of

the *Gita* cannot fail to produce a profound impact upon the mind and consciousness of the devout seeker on the spiritual path. It, along with the *Yoga Sutras*, is a basic text recommended for study by Kriya Yoga devotees.

Bhagavan: Lord. Also, one endowed with six attributes of God: infinite spiritual power, righteousness, glory, splendor, knowledge, and renunciation.

bhakti: Intense, devotional love for God. A common teaching is that love of God leads to knowledge of God, and the cultivation of such knowledge results in the blossoming of love.

Brahma: The initial, expanding and projecting aspect of the Godhead which results in manifestation or the creation process.

Brahma Sutras: Also known as *Vedanta Sutras*. Revelations and philosophical speculations of the seers of vedic times. *Sutras*, "threads," are concise statements made to communicate understanding and are to be contemplated by the student until insight into the examined theme is experienced. Long before the invention of the printing process, and even afterward, teaching by the oral transmission of sutras proved to be a most useful way to communicate knowledge. The truth seeker memorizes sutras and ponders their meaning until understanding unfolds.

brahmacharya: From *brahma*, "divine," and *charya*, "going." The student stage during which one learns of higher values and how to live them. Commitment to learning requires self-discipline, which makes possible control of mental and physical drives and tendencies and the transmutation of gross vital forces into more subtle and fine ones.

Brahman: Supreme Reality, the Absolute.

Buddha: A seer who lived in northern India five hundred years B.C. As a young man of royal birth he became troubled when he

learned of the suffering of the average person in society. After marrying, and fathering a son, he left home to seek higher knowledge. After a duration of extreme yoga practices he adopted "the middle way" of controlled moderation. He accomplished illumination of consciousness, hence the name attributed to him—*the buddha*, "the enlightened one." After his illumination he walked up and down the Ganges valley for almost half a century, teaching freely to all and forming a society of renunciate monastics. He taught love, nonhatred, dedication to truth, the elimination of wishful thinking and nondependence upon externals—including even religious ritual. Illumination, as Buddhists teach, is not merely a *state* of consciousness, but the full realization of the Supreme Self which is the common reality of everyone.

buddhi: The faculty of discernment, the intellectual capacity. When, by discernment, one comprehends the totality of Consciousness, one is a *buddha*, a fully enlightened being. All souls have a "buddha nature" because all souls are specialized expressions of Supreme Consciousness. When one *knows* the "true nature," which differs from *knowing about* it, he or she is spiritually free, liberated.

causal realm: The sphere pervading the cosmos comprised of fine electrical forces and magnetism which preceded astral and gross physical universal manifestation. Souls reside here between astral incarnations and awaken from this level to celestial and more transcendental levels of perception.

chakra: Wheel. In yoga teachings, an astral focus for the distribution of prana (life force) from the brain and through the chakras along the spinal pathway. The seven primary chakras are located in proximity to the brain, medulla oblongata, cervical region of the spine at the neck, dorsal region behind the lungs and heart, lumbar region behind the solar plexus, sacrum region (lower back), and the bottom of the spine. Being astral in character, they emanate sound-frequencies consistent with their

functions which may be heard by a meditator who listens in the inner ear. The prana-frequencies may also be discerned at the spiritual eye center as varied, colored lights. The spiritual eye reflects the lights from the medulla center at the base of the brain as ascending pranas focus there during meditation. The chakras are often illustrated in drawings and paintings as lotus flowers, with opened petals indicating the blossoming of unfolding soul consciousness. When *kundalini* (see glossary definition) awakens, dynamic soul forces flow upward through the chakras to the brain, contributing to enlivening of the body's forces and resulting in spontaneous spiritual awakening during meditation practice or otherwise.

Chitta: Supreme Consciousness as dynamic, creative power.

Christ: The Christ of God is the aspect of the Godhead which is actively expressing within the field of Nature. Christians often refer to the Christ as "the only begotten son of God," the first emanation of divine influence from the Godhead. It is the ruler (the "Lord") of all that occurs in the cosmos. Christians consider Jesus to be an avatar through whom the Christ aspect of God is fully manifested. The word *Christ* is derived from Latin *Christus*, from Greek *Khristos* (*Khristos*, "anointed," and *khriein*, "to anoint"). One who is referred to as Christ is believed to have been anointed of God. In common usage the word referred to the religious rite of anointing with oil. Enlightened seers teach that mere acknowledgement of another's illumination or God-realization is not sufficient to liberate the truth seeker; the seeker must be a disciple of God and awaken to direct realization of higher states of consciousness, including that of the Word or manifesting creative force, the Christ Consciousness or universe-manifesting aspect of God, and God-realization.

consciousness: The word is used two ways in metaphysical literature. 1) Consciousness as awareness of an object. We may say, "I am conscious of my environment, my thoughts and feelings, and of myself as a person." 2) Consciousness without an

object: as self-existent and the "stuff" or essence manifesting in objective realms. Our "states of consciousness" are determined by their degrees of modification. Unmodified consciousness is pure. Full Self-realization is pure consciousness without modifying restrictions.

cosmic consciousness: Sometimes referred to as "unity consciousness," awareness of oneness with all life as an actual, experienced realization. As with other states of consciousness, the cosmic sense may be partial or it may be pronounced. It may unfold gradually or suddenly, bringing with it knowledge which is self-revealed rather than acquired by a formal learning process. Cosmic consciousness can be cultivated by renouncing egocentric attitudes, and by aspiration to spiritual growth, prayer, meditation, and increasing reliance upon the goodness of God. Right living which results in increasing harmony with the rhythms and flows of Nature also facilitates the unfoldment of cosmic consciousness. With the emergence of expanded states of awareness our soul awareness is restored to omnipresence. Fear is replaced by trust, anxiety by soul satisfaction and confidence, and uncertainty by knowledge. When superconscious states are maintained during ordinary waking states, cosmic consciousness becomes increasingly pronounced. One then experiences effortless, spontaneous attunement with the orderly processes of Nature while realizing increasing awareness of higher realities and God.

darshan: To "see" a divine personage or manifestation and to thereby be blessed by that perception. The most blessed darshan is direct perception of the reality of the Divine.

deva: A "shining one," a god. Gods and goddesses (devi) are souls which dwell in fine, celestial realms, or embodied souls which radiate divine splendor.

dharma: That which upholds or maintains. That influential power which supports creation and contributes to orderly, evo-

lutionary processes. To live in harmony with evolutionary processes or the "natural order of events" is to live righteously, correctly, or in accord with one's own dharma and that of the universe.

dhatu: The "supporting tissues" of the body: plasma, blood, muscle, fat, bone, marrow, and reproductive essence, which result from orderly food transformation. The final phase of food transformation is *ojas*, the fine vitality-essence that imparts radiance to the body, strengthens the immune system, resists decay of the body, energizes the mental faculties, and contributes to more rapid spiritual growth.

diksha: Initiation into yoga teachings and practice during which instruction may be given in meditation practices, the initiate commits to a life of enlightened purpose, and the guru transmits spiritual radiance to the disciple. The meditation process recommended may be mantra, pranayama of some kind, and contemplation of the Self as being pure consciousness.

disciple: *Disciple* and *discipline* are from Latin *discipulus*, and *discere*, "to learn." A disciple is a person who is willing to learn and to apply learning in practical, commonsense ways to fulfill purposes and facilitate spiritual growth. Some obstacles to discipleship are: incapacity or inability to learn, egocentricity, mental perversity which causes information to be distorted, laziness, provincialism or small-mindedness, addictive behaviors, and purposelessness. A true disciple is committed to learning how to live and to doing everything possible to allow awakened spiritual consciousness to be demonstrated in daily experience. Knowledge is then acquired and soul liberation results.

dosha: In ayurveda, major consideration is given to implementing regimens for the purpose of balancing the *doshas*, the three primary governing principles influencing body processes and determining the basic psychophysiological constitution. These are: *vata dosha*, comprised of ether-air influences, which regu-

late movements of vital forces and circulation in the body in general; *pitta dosha*, comprised of fire influences which regulate metabolism and transformation; and *kapha dosha*, comprised of water-earth influences, which regulate fluids and liquid substances in the body. When these governing principles are in harmony, functional wellness is supported.

God: The initial manifestation of Supreme Consciousness, endowed with qualities and characteristics—the Godhead or Supreme, expressive Being.

God-realization: Realization is actual experience-knowledge. God-realization is actual experience-knowledge of God that either unfolds progressively as the result of spiritual practice or more suddenly as the result of spontaneous soul awakening. The soul, the true Self of every person, is an individualized unit of God consciousness. Therefore, each soul has innate knowledge of God which only needs to be unfolded. Progressive spiritual growth may result in growth-stages: from ordinary states of self-consciousness, to preliminary superconscious states, then to higher superconscious states resulting in Self-realization and episodes of cosmic consciousness. With progressive spiritual growth, God-realization becomes increasingly pronounced until complete awareness of God is actualized and effortlessly demonstrated in daily experience.

guna: A quality or attribute of God consciousness expressing as an influence which governs cosmic forces in the field of Primary Nature and the cosmos. They are three in number. *Sattwa guna* contributes to the qualities of purity, harmony, balance, happiness, light, virtue, and knowledge. *Rajas guna* contributes to the force and motion of Nature and transformations. *Tamas guna* contributes to heaviness and inertia. These influences are observed in the natural world about and in our bodies and minds.

guru: The *ru*, "light," that removes *gu*, "darkness." The light and reality of God is the true guru, whether directly influential or

operating through an embodied teacher. In common usage the word means "teacher." A *satguru* is a "truth teacher or revealer."

heaven: Originally a cosmological term that identified a region of the universe but which also came to function as a vehicle of religious idealism. In ancient Near Eastern thought, "heaven" identified a region of the observable cosmos, which pointed beyond itself to the realm or field of transcendence. For instance, in ancient Greek mythology, Zeus dwells on Mount Olympus. The Old Testament refers to heaven as God's abode from which he exercises his sovereign rule and to which he finally welcomes the faithful righteous. The New Testament reflects a modified version: Heaven is God's creation in which He resides as well as a condition of blessedness experienced by the spiritually prepared. Various religious sects have their own concepts of heaven and its opposite place or condition, hell. Illusion-free understanding allows one to know that one's inner degree of Self-realization and God consciousness determines circumstantial conditions.

imagination: Mental imagery or "picturing." Regulated imaginal acts differ from daydreaming or passive, wishful thinking only in degree: intentional exercise of imagination enables one to clearly define mental concepts and to engage in "possibility-thinking" for the purpose of mentally assuming desired states of consciousness and providing the impulse for pure desires to be effortlessly manifested.

initiation: Literally "a new beginning." Whenever one learns or experiences something new, more of the reality of life is apprehended. Spiritual initiation may be spontaneous as a result of soul unfoldment or it may be an occasion of formal instruction and spiritual awakening. In the latter instance, the initiate is given guidelines for living, informed about spiritual growth processes, is usually instructed in prayer and meditation procedures, and is invited to commit to a life of dedicated service and spiritual practice. In the yoga tradition the new initiate is

usually given specific meditation instructions, which may include a prayer formula, mantra, or other procedures. A sincere initiate is considered to be a disciple on the enlightenment path.

Iswara: *Isvara.* The universe-involved aspect of God which regulates or governs cosmic processes. The "Lord."

japa: Repetition of any of the names used to refer to God, for the purpose of cultivating devotion and to concentrate during meditation. A *japmala* is a string of beads used to count the chanting of the divine name and to more fully engage the meditator's awareness in the process of contemplation.

jivanmukta: Soul (*jiva*) liberation (*mukti*) while embodied. Traces of karma may yet remain but one is inwardly free because Self-realized. Future actions of a liberated soul are determined, not by karmic compulsion but by knowledge and grace.

jnana: Knowledge, especially knowledge of higher realities, including God and Supreme Consciousness.

jyotish: The study and application of knowledge of astronomy and astrology. In an ancient text, *Kaushitaki Brahmana*, is information indicating that, in 3100 B.C., vedic scholars had knowledge of astronomy which was useful in determining favorable times for religious ceremonies. Vedic astrology calculates planetary positions in relationship to fixed signs. It also provides guidelines by which individuals may assist themselves to live more harmoniously with planetary radiations, including the cultivation of spiritual awareness, attitude adjustment and adaptive behavioral modes, and the use of gemstones worn next to the skin. Certain gemstones are believed to radiate forces similar to those of the planets and may be prescribed for the purpose of strengthening or weakening planetary influences.

Ruby is recommended for Sun influence, pearl for the Moon, red coral for Mars, emerald for Mercury, yellow sapphire for Jupiter, diamond for Venus, blue sapphire for Saturn, and onyx

and cat's eye (beryl) for nodes of the moon. Gems are prescribed by a knowledgeable vedic astrologer after a careful examination of the client's horoscope, usually in gemstone weights of two carats or more. It is further recommended that the gemstone be obtained and set in a ring or pendant at a favorable time, by a person who is spiritually aware, and that specific mantras be chanted at the time the gemstone is first worn. Gold, silver, and other metals are prescribed for the settings.

Sri Yukteswar often recommended the wearing of gemstones for declared purposes, admitting that sometimes the benefits experienced by the wearer were due to his hidden blessing, as well as due to the faith of the wearer. Paramahansa Yogananda occasionally recommended that certain disciples wear an arm bangle formed of strands of gold, silver, and copper. To other disciples he would say, "You don't need it."

kalpa: A duration, or era, of time.

karma: The operative principle of causation; for instance, the thoughts we habitually think and the actions we perform often determine our day-to-day experiences and circumstances. The mind's karmic condition includes the accumulated memories which are recorded in the mental field as impressions or *samskaras*.

kaya-kalpa: An ayurvedic procedure used for the purpose of rejuvenating the body. It may include internal cleansings, routines to balance the doshas or governing principles of the body, prolonged rest, vitalizing diet, and extended interludes of deep meditation. To ensure privacy the patient remains in a carefully prepared environment, removed from social interactions. Herbs may be prescribed, as well as other vitalizing substances. It is by this process that some saints have retained their physical bodies for hundreds of years, to fulfill their mundane purposes and complete their spiritual unfoldment. See *rasayana*.

kriya: The word means "action." Kriya Yoga is the path of

intentional action, for the purpose of removing all physical and mental obstacles to God-realization. See appendix.

Kriya Yoga: Patanjali's description in his *Yoga Sutras* (2:2) is comprehensive: "Regulation of sensory impulses, Self-study and analysis of the nature of consciousness, and surrender to God, is the way to peace of soul. This is the path of Kriya Yoga." A disciple on the Kriya Yoga path lives with conscious intention, avoiding all actions which are inconsistent with higher purposes and engaging in actions which result in psychological transformation, refinement of the body, and more rapid spiritual growth. On the Kriya Yoga path the devotee is encouraged to cultivate spiritual growth in accord with personal needs and psychological characteristics while attending to primary disciplines, right living, and spiritual practice. In the Kriya Yoga tradition as taught by the guru line of Mahavatar Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, Sri Yukteswar, Paramahansa Yogananda and his successors, emphasis is given to the practice of specific meditation techniques: prayer, mantra, sound and light contemplation, dynamic pra-nayama practice, and more advanced procedures. These meditation techniques, which are learned from a qualified teacher, enable the devotee to experience a quickening of spiritual evolution and to realize in one incarnation soul unfoldment which might otherwise require thousands of years.

kundalini: "Dormant, coiled potential" residing in Nature and in our bodies. When it is expressive in Nature, life forms emerge on the planet. When it awakens in a person, soul qualities begin to unfold, intellectual capacities are unveiled, intuition awakens, and spiritual growth is accelerated. Kundalini awakens spontaneously when aspiration for spiritual growth is ardent and noble qualities are cultivated. Awakening can also be encouraged by natural living, the practice of hatha yoga, pranayama, meditation, by association with spiritually awake people, and by visiting sacred places where spiritual forces are pronounced. Soul force can also be transmitted from guru to disciple when the latter is receptive, resulting in kundalini

awakening. See *shaktipat*.

mahasamadhi: Conscious transition from the body. *Maha* ("great") *samadhi* ("oneness") occurs when the soul's awareness is removed from identification with relative phenomena and experiences freedom in God or transcends all of the dualities. The term is also used to refer to a shrine which has been constructed over the tomb of an enlightened yogi or saint.

mantra: A word or sound "listened to" during preliminary stages of meditation, to serve as a focus for contemplation and to keep attention from being involved with environmental circumstances, physical feelings, moods, or thought processes. When the meditator's attention is attracted to the mantra, perfect concentration follows without effort. Eventually, the mantra is transcended and meditation proceeds spontaneously.

Words or word-phrases which are agreeable to the meditator can be used as meditation mantras for the purpose of aiding concentration and leading attention inward. Sanskrit mantras have the potency of a "seed" sound-frequency which acts directly upon the mind and nervous system, clearing the mental field and refining the brain and nerves so that creative flows of consciousness can occur more easily. A meditation mantra given with initiation into spiritual practice is charged with the potency of the guru's intention and his or her own realization. It then carries that influence into the mind and body of the meditator with transforming effects. This is one reason why an initiate is counseled to maintain mantra instruction as a private matter and not to discuss it with others. Even though the same mantra may be given to many persons, the personal instruction of the guru and the special quality of spiritual force which is transmitted during initiation is for the individual alone. Another reason for maintaining privacy in matters of meditation practices is that one should give full attention to the process and direct all energies to that purpose. Superficial discussion about meditation procedures and practices weakens personal resolve and dissipates vital forces and mental powers.

maya: The primal substance of which Nature is formed: the components of which are the creative force of Om, space, cosmic particles within space, and time. One characteristic of maya is its form-producing or manifesting impulse. Another characteristic is that it is truth-veiling. When a soul becomes too identified with the field of Nature, it experiences a clouding of its intuitive and intellectual capacities and becomes deluded. Maya is illusory but it is not an illusion, being a manifestation of creative force flowing from the field of God and the actions of the gunas (the regulating attributes which contain and direct cosmic processes).

meditation: The process of flowing attention to one's chosen object of contemplation so that higher realities can be apprehended and Self-realization spontaneously actualized.

metaphysics: From the Greek *meta* (beyond, after) and *Physika* (Aristotle's treatise called *Physics*) hence Aristotle's writings "after his *Physics*." The word is now used to refer to philosophical theories that deal with matters which transcend (or are outside the range of) physical world operations and its sciences.

moksha: Liberation of consciousness.

mudra: A symbolic gesture; for instance, the upraised, open palm presented to the world is the gesture for "fear not." Also a procedure described in yoga texts to afford the practitioner a degree of control over involuntary processes of the body and to awaken dormant soul forces.

nadi: A channel through which prana flows through the astral body. *Ida*, the moon current, flows through the left channel along the spinal pathway. *Pingala*, the solar current, flows through the right channel. The central channel is *sushumna*, "the pathway of God" through which prana ascends to the brain during meditation or at other times when it spontaneously moves.

nadi shuddhi: Cleansing or purification of the nadis, which results in refinement of the nervous system and restructuring of the brain. This occurs as a result of spontaneous flows of *prana-shakti* (creative power of life force) or can be accomplished by pranayama practice.

nirguna-Brahman: Supreme Consciousness without modifying attributes. *Saguna*-Brahman refers to Consciousness expressing *with* modifying attributes.

Om: *Aum.* The primary creative force from which all cosmic forces and manifestations of Nature are produced. Also called the *Word*, as in *The Gospel According to Saint John 1:1*: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Om is mentioned in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* as the sound current to be used as a focus for meditation.

omnipotence: God's unrestricted power.

omnipresence: Present everywhere.

omniscience: Awareness-knowledge of the totality of Consciousness and its manifest expressions.

parabda karma: Residual karmic impressions which may be subject to restimulation and can cause effects corresponding to their character and potency. If their outcomes are harmless, or compatible with our chosen lifestyle, they can be allowed expression and worked out or exhausted. They can also be resisted, restrained, and dissolved by right self-analysis, right living, and the cultivation of superconsciousness.

paramukta: The state of complete liberation of consciousness, with no traces of impelling karma.

prakriti: The field of Primal Nature and manifest Nature. *Purusha* is the divine life that enlivens Nature, sometimes

referred to as the Cosmic Soul.

prana: Life force which pervades Nature. Prana-frequencies perform various functions in Nature and in our bodies. When they are in harmony, health prevails; when disrupted, discomfort and disease can occur.

pranayama: Procedures used to regulate prana flows, usually by regulating breathing rhythms. A simple form of pranayama is alternate nostril breathing, performed to harmonize prana flows in the body and to balance electrical activities of the two hemispheres of the brain. Other pranayamas can be performed to cool the body, increase body heat, awaken vital forces, and to vitalize the chakras. An advanced form of pranayama is taught to Kriya Yoga initiates which, when practiced correctly and diligently, makes possible easier concentration and more successful meditation experience.

prayer: Reverent petitioning or communing with God, the results of which are experienced as demonstrated circumstances and more spiritually satisfying states of consciousness. Prayer can be simple mental or verbal communication with God, or constant attention given to cultivating an awareness of the presence and reality of God. It is a volitional act of turning away from self-sense to allow a more comprehensive realization of soul qualities and higher realities to be actualized. Devout persons of all faiths have experienced the transformational effects of surrendered prayer. Many have realized God directly by prayer, without knowledge or practice of other techniques or procedures.

rasayana: *Rasa* can be translated to mean taste, juice, elixir, or essence; *ayana* means "pathway," "to circulate," or "to have a home or abode." In ayurveda, rasayana regimens are used to restore the immune system to full strength and to encourage body fluids to circulate and find their places in harmonious ways. Herbal compounds are often prescribed for rasayana therapy regimens, and these preparations are chosen to suit the

individual's needs and constitutional nature. For instance, one general purpose preparation contains raw sugar, clarified butter, Indian gall nut, Indian gooseberry, dried catkins, Indian pennywort, honey, nutgrass, white sandlewood, embrella, aloewood, licorice, cardamom, cinnamon, and turmeric. The purified ashes (*bhasmas*) of metals and gems may also be used for their potent, long-term influences. They are believed to neutralize aging processes as well as to vitalize the systems. See *kaya-kalpa.*

reincarnation: The cycle of return to physical embodiment to fulfill purposes and awaken spiritually if one is not sufficiently conscious to function freely in astral spheres and beyond. Egocentric desires, attachments, and unconsciousness due to delusion can contribute to the soul's return to this or any other sphere of involvement after a brief or extended duration of absence following transition.

renunciation: Relinquishment of attachments to things, circumstances, and behaviors while selflessly involved in relationships, constructive actions, and service.

rishi: A seer, one who is enlightened.

sadhana: One's spiritual practices and involvement in processes chosen to remove inner restrictions, to allow Self-illumination or spiritual growth leading to liberation of consciousness.

saint: A person who expresses divine qualities. One through whom such qualities naturally and spontaneously flow. Saintly people may not always be fully God-realized or enlightened; they may have a degree of God consciousness while still working out personal karmic conditions. Fully God-realized persons are also often referred to as saints.

samadhi: Literally "to bring together" the devotee's attention and awareness with the object of contemplative meditation. A spontaneous realization of oneness during which mental modi-

fications do not intrude.

samkalpa: Determination, intention or will which gives rise to an impulse which causes an event to unfold or a circumstance to manifest. An impulse arising in the field of God resulted in the manifestation of the cosmos and our involvement with it.

samkhya: To enumerate, or number. Samkhya is the Indian philosophical system which examines and explains the order of the universe by describing categories and their operations. The core of this philosophical system is expounded in the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Yoga Sutras*.

samsara: The "forever becoming" of cosmic processes. Unenlightened persons are caught in the shifting currents of Nature and their changes and transformations. An enlightened person flows with change while remaining inwardly anchored in knowledge of higher realities.

sanatana dharma: "The eternal way of righteousness." This way of life was understood in pre-vedic eras and is said to be without origin, having its roots in the unbounded field of Pure Consciousness which is without beginning or end.

Emphasis is placed on endeavoring to fulfill the primary aims of human life. These are described as: learning to live with the full support of evolutionary forces which uphold creation and ensure growth and completion of purposes; experiencing enjoyable, fulfilling circumstances and relationships; learning to have access to available resources so that enjoyable, fulfilling circumstances are possible; and to cultivate awakened spiritual consciousness for the purpose of realizing liberation of consciousness in the present incarnation.

Sanskrit: The refined, perfected or polished root language from which approximately 100 Indo-European languages, including English, are derived. Prominent in vedic times in India and still used today by some scholars and students of philosophy. It is

said that the very alphabet is a mantra, a sound-phrase of spiritual significance and power which reveals the soul-frequencies of creation. Sanskrit grammarians say that every word or sound (*shabda*) has a power (*shakti*) which conveys the sense which is inseparably related to the sound. Hence Sanskrit word-sounds have an innate power to convey their inner meaning. The subtle sound-element behind the audible sound is the fundamental sound (*sphota*). Audible or written Sanskrit accurately reveals the meaning of what is read or heard, and contemplation of the subtle sound-element or seed power reveals its true essence. Sanskrit mantras are therefore taught as being superior sounds for the purpose of facilitating a meditator's spiritual awakening. All mantras derive their power from Om, the primal sound current with origins in the field of the Godhead and expressive throughout the universe.

sat: Reality, absolute truth, is-ness.

Self-realization: Actual experience of the true nature. The real Self of every person and creature is Pure Consciousness. When identified with mental processes, the body and its sensations, and sense objects, the Self becomes outwardly involved and "forgets" the true nature. Right Self-remembrance, ordered living, and right spiritual practice make possible spiritual awakening and conscious Self-realization. Self-realization is not really an attainment; it is the restoration of awareness to its original, pure state.

shakti: Cosmic creative force enlivening Nature. The creative force within our bodies, our own soul force. The unexpressed portion which remains dormant until aroused is kundalini.

shaktipat: The transmission of shakti or creative force from guru to disciple. Also, the spontaneous awakening of this force as a result of devotion, yoga practice, prayer, or God's grace.

siddha: An "accomplished" or perfected of yogi, or anyone who

is fully enlightened.

siddhi: The powers or abilities of accomplishment or perfection which spontaneously manifest when all limiting restrictions are banished by superior realization.

spiritual eye: Located between the eyebrows where prana currents converge, where the meditator flows awareness during preliminary stages of practice. Ascending prana currents focused here can result in inner perception of light, which the meditator can observe to keep concentration steady. Surrendering to the spiritual eye the meditator may experience absorption in light or pass through the spiritual eye into subtle and fine realms of consciousness. Newly awakened devotees may feel sensation at the spiritual eye when meditating or at other times; an indication that prana forces are becoming more pronounced in their actions there. People with no prior knowledge or awareness of the spiritual eye may perceive it during an accidental near-death experience or when leaving the body at the time of transition. Consciousness then flows through it into astral or higher realms.

superconsciousness: States of consciousness superior to the normal states of unconsciousness, subconsciousness, and ordinary waking states during which thoughts are dominant and instinct and memory influence mental processes. Preliminary superconscious states may be experienced along with thoughts and mood changes. With practice in meditation (and by maintaining "witness consciousness" or "Self-observation" when not meditating) superconsciousness is experienced without mental or emotional interference. Superconscious meditation and contemplation allows progressive transformations, leading to cosmic consciousness, God consciousness and transcendental realizations. See *samadhi.*

swami: A member of the ancient monastic order reorganized by Adi (the first) Shankara in the eighth century. A swami is one

who renounces all attachments except that of God-relationship.

tattwa: The true essence of anything. The essence of a thing can be discerned by the practice of *samyama*, perfect contemplation.

Transcendental Field: The unmanifest field of Pure Consciousness-Existence.

Upanishads: A collection of sacred texts with origins in the oral teaching tradition. In centuries past, in India, the disciple would live with the guru in a retreat environment and "sit near" him to learn; hence, the term *upanishad* (*upa*-near; *ni*-down; *sad*-to sit.) There are many upanishads. The ones for which Shankara wrote commentaries are termed the Greater Upanishads because of their common accessibility. The Lesser Upanishads, which Shankara did not write about, contain more advanced yoga philosophy and instruction meant for the special few who are qualified to be taught by a guru and who can benefit from the knowledge. Among the latter is the *Shandilya Upanishad* which was composed by one of Lahiri Mahasaya's ancestors. Kriya Yoga meditation procedures are described in it.

vasana: Latent tendencies rooted in deeper layers of the mind. When inclined in the direction of actualization, their impulses cause movements in the psyche, often resulting in experiences which cannot always be anticipated as well as in fluctuations and transformations within the mental field. These latent tendencies can be weakened and eliminated by yoga practice and awakened spiritual consciousness.

veda: Revealed knowledge. The body of scripture collectively referred to as the *Vedas* includes the revelations of the ancient seers. The *Upanishads* offer philosophical explanations of the *Vedas*.

Vedanta: The summing up of the wisdom of the vedic tradition. The "final wisdom-knowledge" that Supreme Consciousness is

the cause, reality, and support of all that is.

viveka: Discrimination between the changeless and the transitory which makes possible error-free perception and a life without illusions.

vritti: *Vrittis* are the wave actions in the mental field caused by desire, restlessness, and the influences of memories stored in the subconscious. When thoughts are somewhat stilled during meditation, superconscious perceptions occur. Prevailing superconscious states resist and subdue the wave actions in the mental field, eventually resulting in purification of the mind so that the entire range of the mind is accessible and responsive to soul impulses. Permanent Self-realization is actualized when awareness is no longer influenced by the vrittis.

Vyasa: An ancient sage believed to have arranged many of the vedic texts in their present form. A name used by several sages who worked on the project over a period of many years.

yoga: To "yoke" or bring together all aspects of body, mind, and personality so that functional, skillful living can be actualized and Self-realization facilitated. Various systems have evolved for this purpose. The end of yoga practice is flawless samadhi (perfect realization or full enlightenment).

yugas: World Ages as calculated by seers with insight into cosmic time-cycles. An understanding of these sheds light on events leading up to the present era and imparts a vision of possibilities capable of being unfolded and experienced in the decades and centuries before us.

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